Community Survey Results from Conkey & Clifford Neighborhood: Residents' View of Their Neighborhood

March 2014

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Overview

In a survey of residents from a neighborhood associated with a widely-recognized open-air marijuana market, it was found that residents were indeed concerned with drug activity and other concerns, such as loitering. There is a high turnover of residents, with most people renting and living in the area less than five years. Residents felt more positively about their neighbors than about the neighborhood itself. Residents felt positively overall about the neighborhood's park, and a decent number of people use the various recreational facilities in the area.

These findings suggest that the marijuana market is affecting the quality of life and perhaps economic development in this neighborhood. Local programs may be able to work with residents to improve community cohesion and public safety while implementing activities and promoting positive use of the area's recreational facilities. Improving quality of life and safety may also encourage economic development in the area. Initiatives focusing on such community organizing and economic development are likely to be more effective than policing, since possessing small amounts of marijuana has been decriminalized in New York since 1977.

Introduction

A community survey was conducted by the Rochester Drug Free Streets Initiative (RDFSI) in the Conkey and Clifford Avenue neighborhood to determine how residents perceived their own neighborhood. The purpose of the community survey was to establish if residents held a positive or negative view of the Park located on the corner of Conkey and Clifford Avenue, of the neighborhood, and of others who live in the neighborhood. This was done because residents who live in the neighborhood are dealing directly with the open-air marijuana market and the criminal activity that comes along with such markets. Residents were also asked about what they like and dislike about their neighborhood.
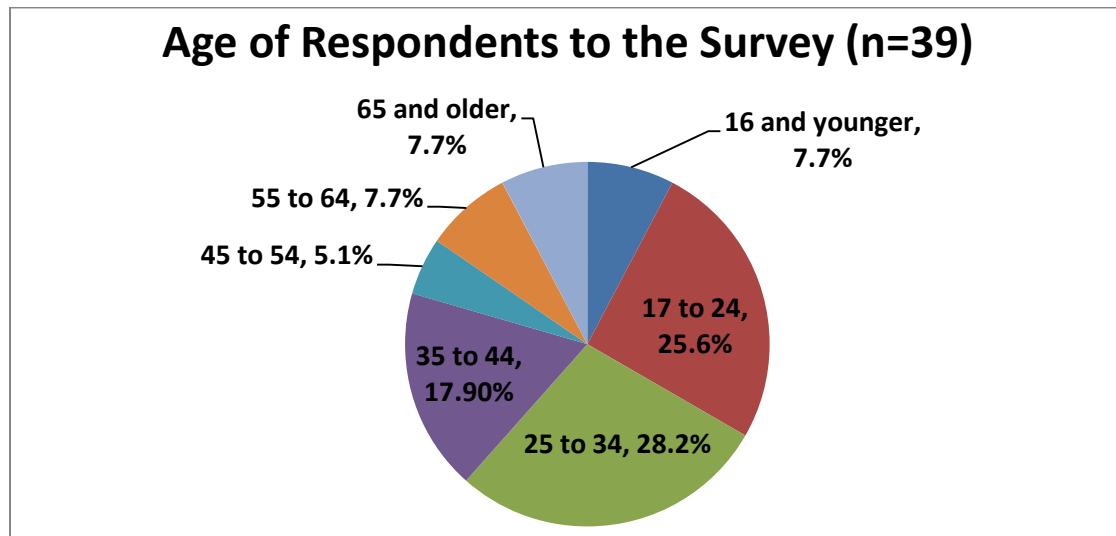
Since the survey was conducted door-by-door; the resulting sample is a non-random sample of the residents in the Conkey & Clifford Avenue neighborhood. While conducting outreach in the Conkey & Clifford neighborhood RDFSI representatives asked residents if they wanted to participate in taking a survey. Outreach members read the questions on the survey to the residents and filled it out for residents or let the resident fill out the survey themselves. A total of 45 surveys were collected from the Conkey & Clifford neighborhood. Despite this small number of respondents, the resulting analysis should give valuable insight into the various effects that the open-air marijuana market has on residents in the Conkey & Clifford neighborhood.

The community survey (included at the end of the paper), which was developed by researchers at the Center for Public Safety Initiatives (CPSI), consisted of four demographic questions, one question on the use of recreational facilities & Conkey & Clifford corner park, three adjectives checklist questions, and two questions that asked residents to list their concerns and what they like about their neighborhood. The adjectives checklist questions gave the residents the opportunity to choose from a list adjectives they felt described the park, neighborhood, and neighbors. The adjective checklist for the park and neighbors provided 12 negative adjectives and 12 positive adjectives which residents were able to circle. The adjective checklist for the neighborhood provided 14 negative adjectives and 14 positive adjectives.

Demographics of the Respondents

Of the residents surveyed in the Conkey & Clifford neighborhood, the vast majority were under 45 years old, with half between 17 and 34 years old (see Figure 1). Out of the 43 residents who answered the question, 58.1% were female whereas only 41.9% were male.

Figure 1:

Age of Respondents to the Survey (n=39)

65 and older, 7.7%

55 to 64, 7.7%

45 to 54, 5.1%

35 to 44, 17.90%

25 to 34, 28.2%

17 to 24, 25.6%

16 and younger, 7.7%

Housing Status of Respondents

Over a third of respondents lived in the neighborhood for two years or less (35.8%). Over 75% lived in the neighborhood for less than 5 years. Only about 20% lived in the neighborhood more than 10 years, and only 7.1% lived in the neighborhood more than 30 years.

Next, respondents were asked if they owned or rented their property. Most (77.4%) reported that they rented the property, and under one quarter (22.6%) reported that they owned their property (n = 31). A lower number of home owners is often associated with a high turnover of neighbors and lower neighborhood stability, and it could pose a challenge during times when the community is encouraged to come together to address problems (William Rohe & Leslie Stewart, 1996). In 2012, the TIPS (Trust-Information-Programs-Services) initiative surveyed 205 residents across several neighborhoods. That survey found that 36.1% reported that they owned their property and 63.9% reported that they rented their property. Thus, if these numbers are representative of all people in the neighborhood, between 2012 and 2013, the home ownership rate is 13.5% lower in the Conkey/Clifford neighborhood.

Neighborhood Features and Characteristics

The survey asked residents if they have used any recreational facilities or parks in the neighborhood or elsewhere, within the past 30 days. Of particular interest is the use of a neighborhood park located on the corner of Conkey and Clifford Avenues, as well as the El Camino Trail located behind the park. Figure 2 below shows the results for each recreational facility or park.
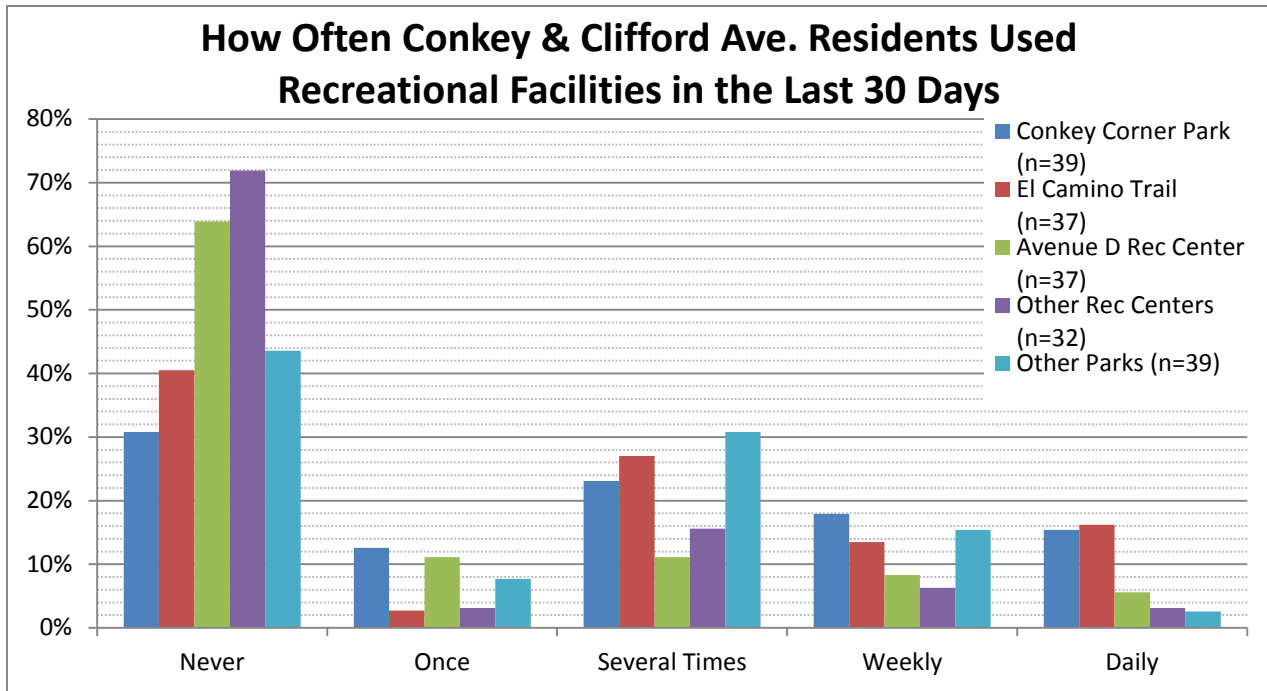
Almost a third of those surveyed had not used the park in the past month, while 15.4% used the park daily. Overall, 69.2% of respondents reported that they used the park within the past 30 days. Under half (40.5%) of 37 respondents reported that they had not used the El Camino Trail in the past 30 days, and 15.2% reported to had used the trail daily. Overall, 59.4% of respondents reported that they had used the trail within the pasted 30 days.

The survey also asked if residents had used the Avenue D Recreation Center located nearby. Of the 37 respondents, 63.9% reported that they have never used the center in the past 30 days, and 5.6% of the respondents reported that they use the center daily. In total, 36.1% reported that they have used the center at least once in the past 30 days.

Next, residents were asked if they have used any other recreation centers besides the Avenue D Recreation Center. Of the 32 respondents, 71.9% had not used any other centers in the past 30 days, 15.6% of the respondents reported using other centers several times in the past 30 days, and 3.1% of the respondents reported using other centers daily in the past 30 days. Overall, 28.1% reported that they have used another center in the past 30 days.

Next, residents were asked if they used any other recreational features or parks. Out of the 39 respondents, just under half reported that they had never used other parks, under a third reported that they had used other parks several times, and 15.4% of the respondents reported that

Figure 2:

How Often Conkey & Clifford Ave. Residents Used Recreational Facilities in the Last 30 Days

they used other parks weekly. Only one out of the 39 respondents reported using other parks daily in the past 30 days. Over half (56.4%) have used other parks in the past 30 days.

Residents were asked to write down the other parks or recreation centers they have used in the past 30 days. Their responses are listed below.

If you use other recreation centers or parks, which ones do you use?

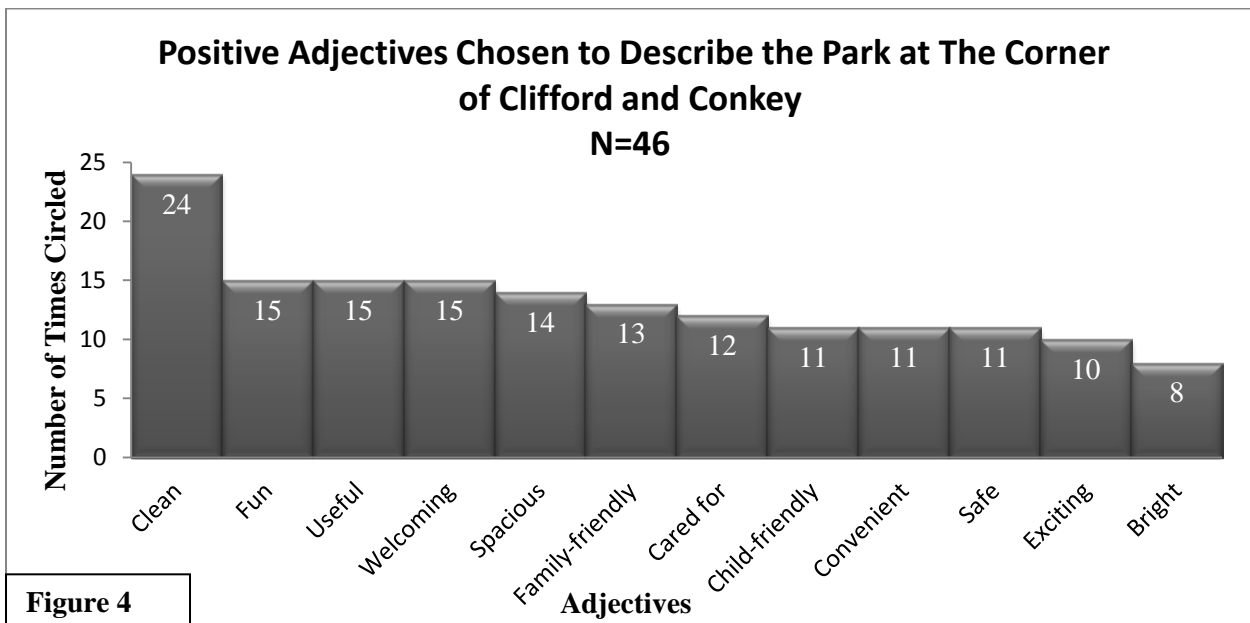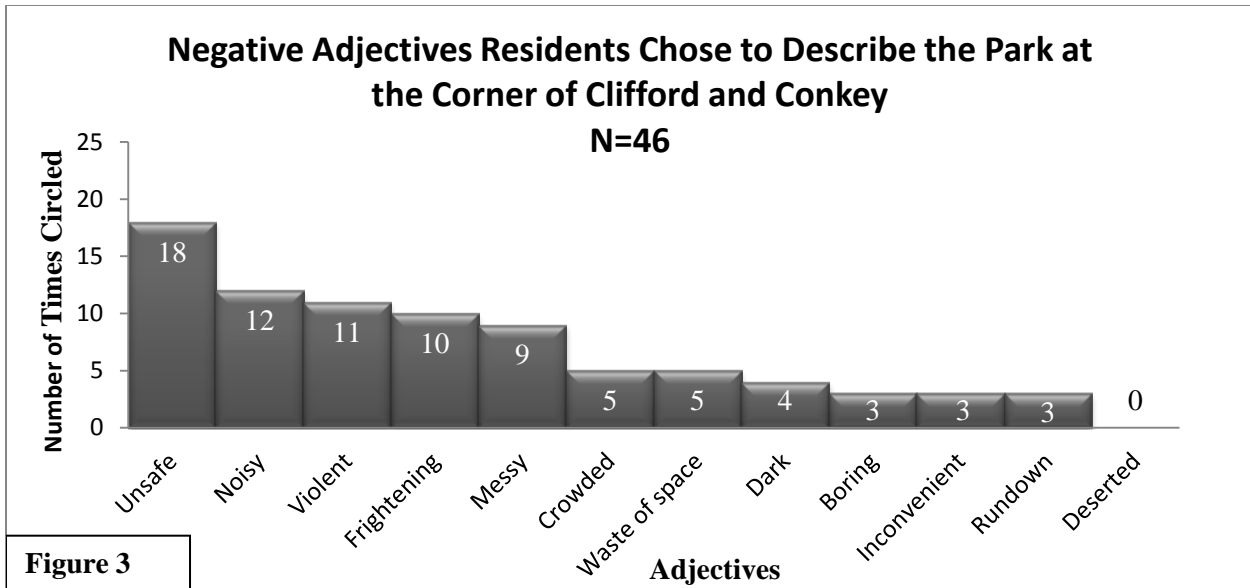|	
Baden Street	Carter Street Recreation Center
Campbell Street	River Trail
Seneca Park	Durand
School #33	Fairport Parks
School #8	Webster Parks
Park by Edison	Henrietta Parks
North Street Park	Ellison Park

This list does not signify the number of times these parks are used by the residents but is a demonstration of the parks that some residents have used in the past thirty days besides the parks in their primary area of the Conkey & Clifford Avenue neighborhood.

Adjectives to Describe the Neighborhood

Residents were also asked to complete three adjective checklists by circling adjectives from a pre-defined list that they believed described the Conkey & Clifford Park, the neighborhood, and the people who live in the neighborhood. These types of checklists are used to obtain more nuanced information about the residents' feelings or attitudes. The following charts (Figures 3 through 10) display the number of times adjectives were circled by respondents.

Figure 3 illustrates the number of times respondents circled each negative adjective to describe the park on the corner of Conkey and Clifford. Of note, 18 respondents circled the adjective unsafe, which illustrates that less than half of these residents feel that the park is unsafe. Even though quite a few residents mentioned feeling unsafe, a lower number circled violent, frightening, dark and noisy, which might be associated with feeling unsafe. None of the residents circled the adjective deserted, which indicates that they see the park on Conkey and Clifford as being used by the community.

Figure 4 illustrates the number of each positive adjective circled also illustrates a positive view of the park by the residents. The residents felt that the park is clean, fun, useful, and welcoming. Many felt it was family-friendly and cared for. Even though more residents indicated feeling unsafe (18 people, Figure 3) than safe (11 people, Figure 4), residents are still utilizing the park even if some feel unsafe.

Negative Adjectives Residents Chose to Describe the Park at the Corner of Clifford and Conkey
N=46

Number of Times Circled — Adjectives: Unsafe 18, Noisy 12, Violent 11, Frightening 10, Messy 9, Crowded 5, Waste of space 5, Dark 4, Boring 3, Inconvenient 3, Rundown 3, Deserted 0

Figure 3

Positive Adjectives Chosen to Describe the Park at The Corner of Clifford and Conkey
N=46

Number of Times Circled — Adjectives: Clean 24, Fun 15, Useful 15, Welcoming 15, Spacious 14, Family-friendly 13, Cared for 12, Child-friendly 11, Convenient 11, Safe 11, Exciting 10, Bright 8

Figure 4

Residents were next asked to choose words to describe their neighborhood. The results are shown in Figures 5 and 6. The residents have a more negative view of the neighborhood than a positive view. Out of the 46 residents, the term "drug sale" was circled 24 times, and "hangouts" and "loitering" were both circled 21 times. Other commonly-chosen terms, such as "drug use" and "marijuana" are associated with what one might consider a drug market. A

smaller number of residents felt the neighborhood was friendly and happy. More residents felt that the neighborhood was dangerous (12) compared to safe (10), negative (12) compared to positive (6), weak in police presence (12) as opposed to strong in police presence (9), and full of strangers (12) compared to neighborly (8). Two more residents chose the word quiet than chose noisy. Overall, it seems that the majority of the residents have a more negative view of the neighborhood than a positive view. The negative adjectives that were circled by the residents also demonstrate the activities of an active drug market.
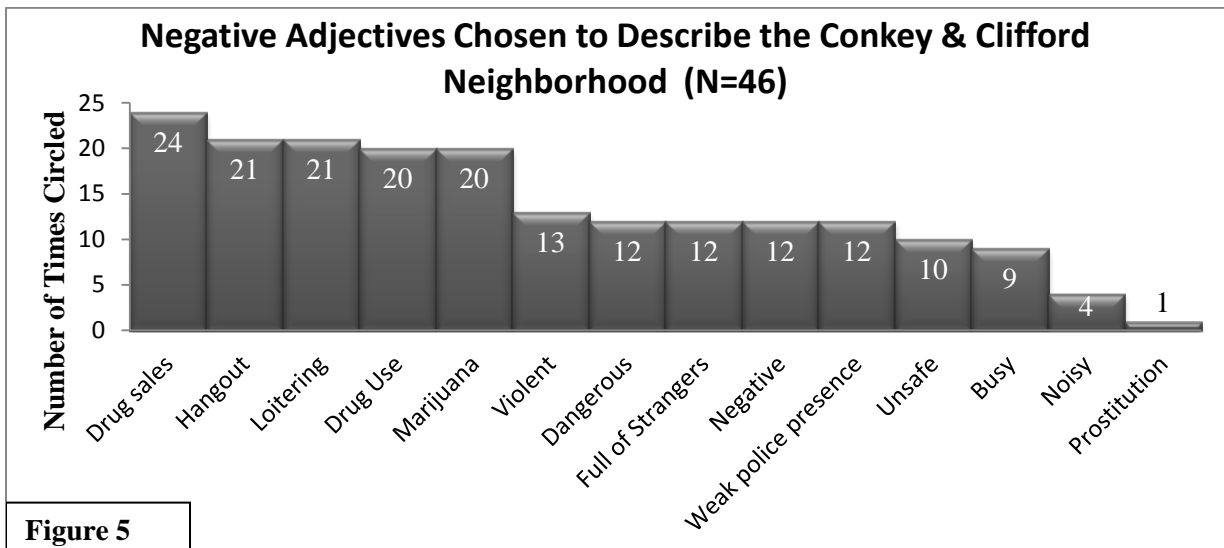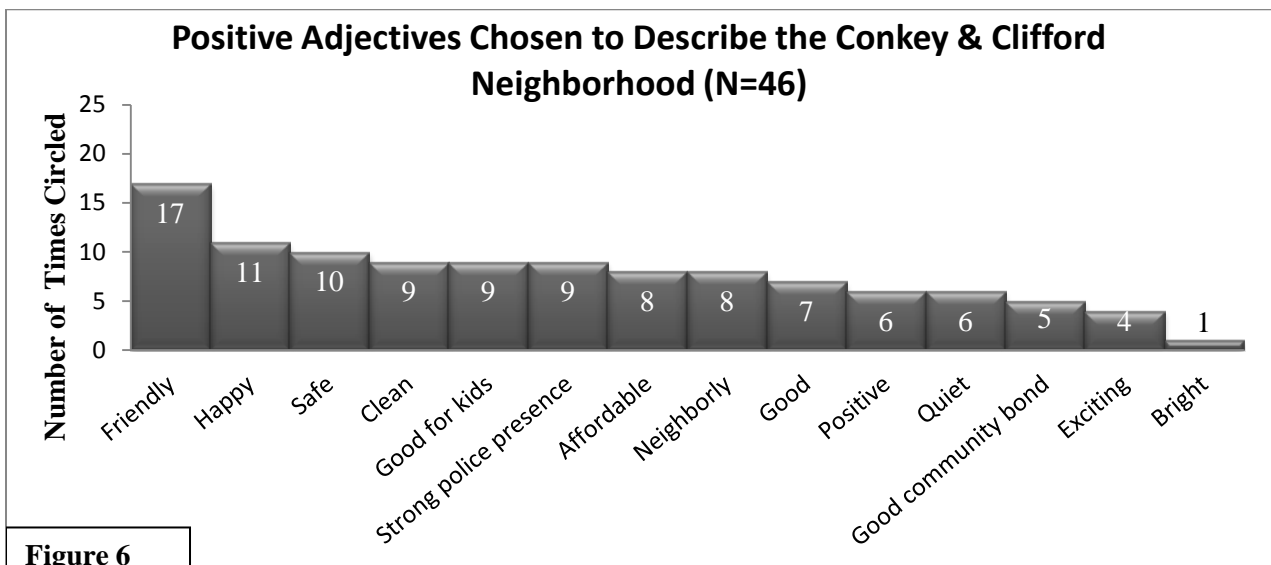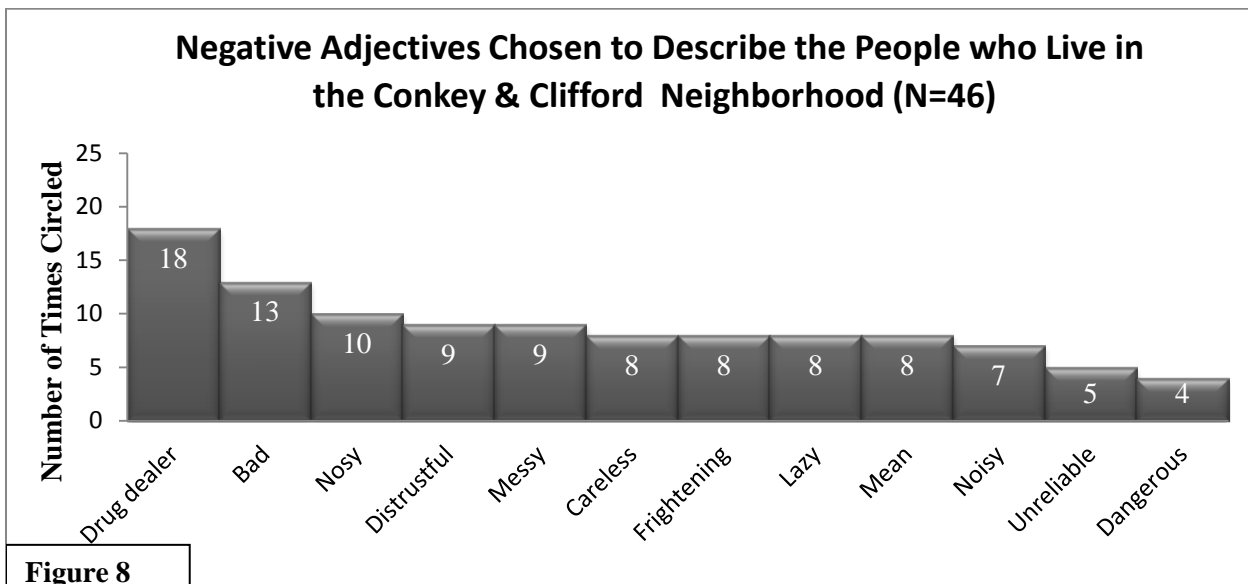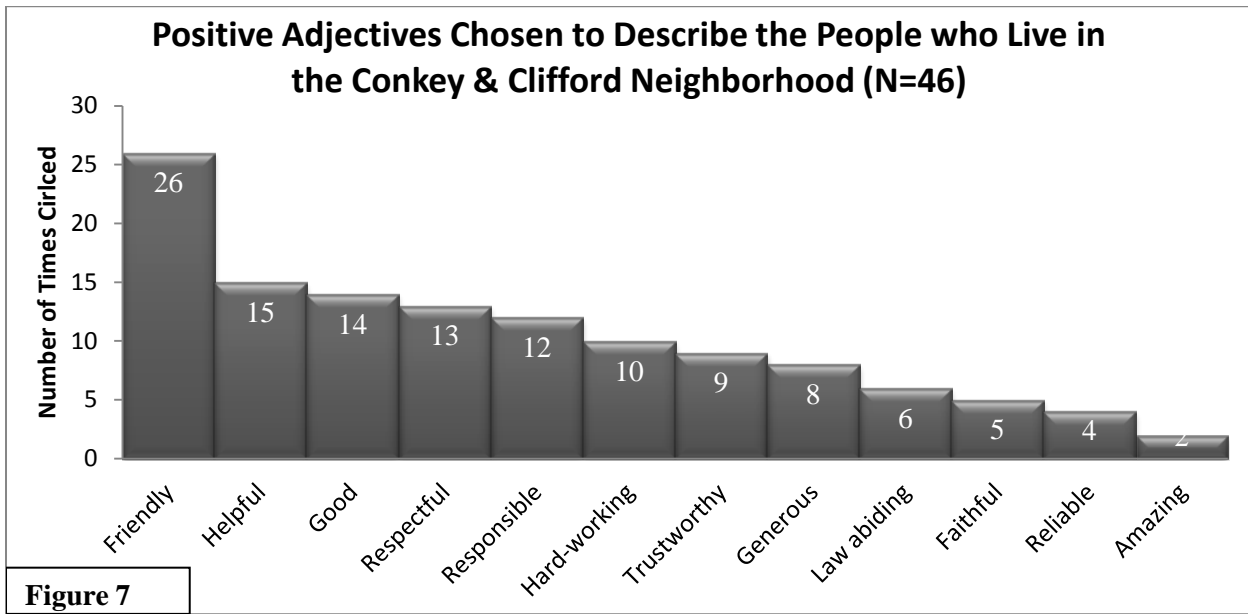

Figure 5

Figure 6

Residents were then asked to choose words to describe the people who live in their neighborhood (Figures 7 and 8). The terms friendly, drug dealer, and helpful were the most popular words chosen. It seems that residents have a more positive feeling about their neighbors than a negative feeling. Residents felt that their neighbors were helpful, good, respectful, responsible, and hard-working. Less people felt their neighbors were disrespectful, careless, and messy. However, more people felt their neighbors were frightening than law-abiding or reliable.

Positive Adjectives Chosen to Describe the People who Live in the Conkey & Clifford Neighborhood (N=46)

Friendly: 26, Helpful: 15, Good: 14, Respectful: 13, Responsible: 12, Hard-working: 10, Trustworthy: 9, Generous: 8, Law abiding: 6, Faithful: 5, Reliable: 4, Amazing: 2

Y-axis: Number of Times Circled

Figure 7

Negative Adjectives Chosen to Describe the People who Live in the Conkey & Clifford Neighborhood (N=46)

Drug dealer: 18, Bad: 13, Nosy: 10, Distrustful: 9, Messy: 9, Careless: 8, Frightening: 8, Lazy: 8, Mean: 8, Noisy: 7, Unreliable: 5, Dangerous: 4

Y-axis: Number of Times Circled

Figure 8

10

The following charts show how many more positive adjectives residents circled than negative adjectives on each of the adjective checklists (number of positives responses subtracted by the number of negative responses). When looking at the x-axis of these graphs, the positive numbers (to the right of the .00 tick) represent the overall positive responses, showing how many more positive adjectives a person circled than negative. The negative numbers (to the left of .00) represent the overall negative responses, showing how many less positive adjectives were circled than negative. The 0 mark represents the number of individuals who chose exactly the same number of positive and negative adjectives. The heights of the bars show how many people responded in such a way as to yield the positive-minus-negative number on the x axis. The curves drawn on the graphs show the distribution of these response patterns. If the curve's peak is to the right, residents felt more positively overall. If to the left, they felt more negatively.

Results: Figure 9 shows the results regarding the park. Here we see, for example, that 1 out of the 45 respondents circled 10 more positive adjectives than negative adjectives, and six out of the 45 respondents circled 1 more positive adjective than negative. Overall, the distribution

curve represents a "Bell Curve", so there is a normal distribution of responses. Although, the graph represents a normal curve, the curve's center is shifted slightly to the right (positive), with a mean of +1.69. So, most respondents feel positively overall about the park.

Figure 9

Residents Description of the Clifford and Conkey Park

Mean = 1.69
Std. Dev. = 4.611
N = 45

Number of Respondents

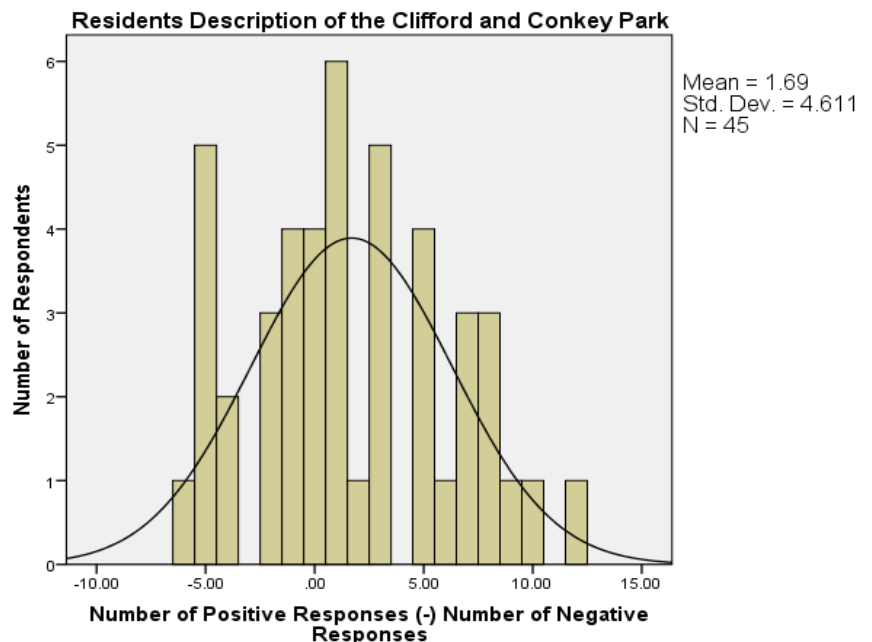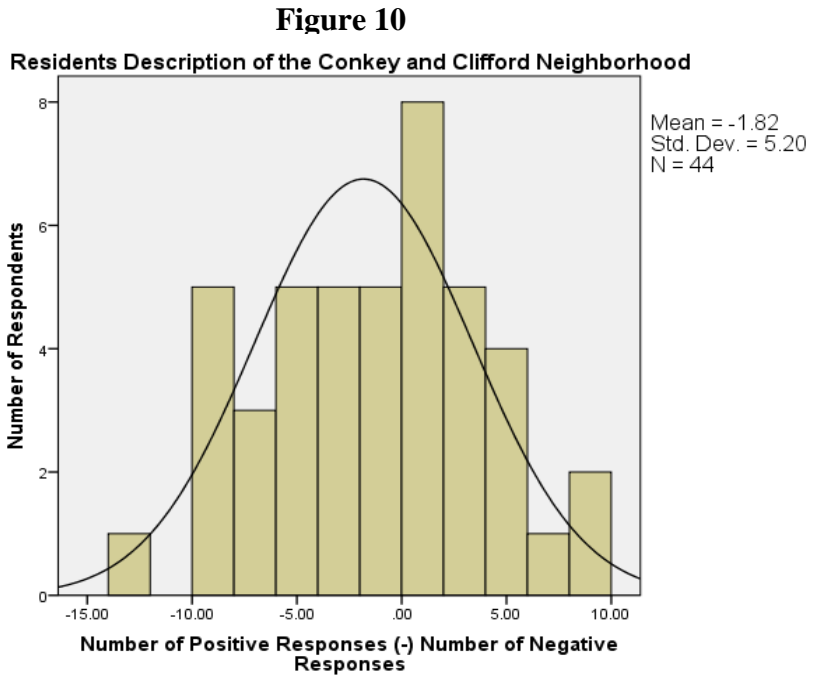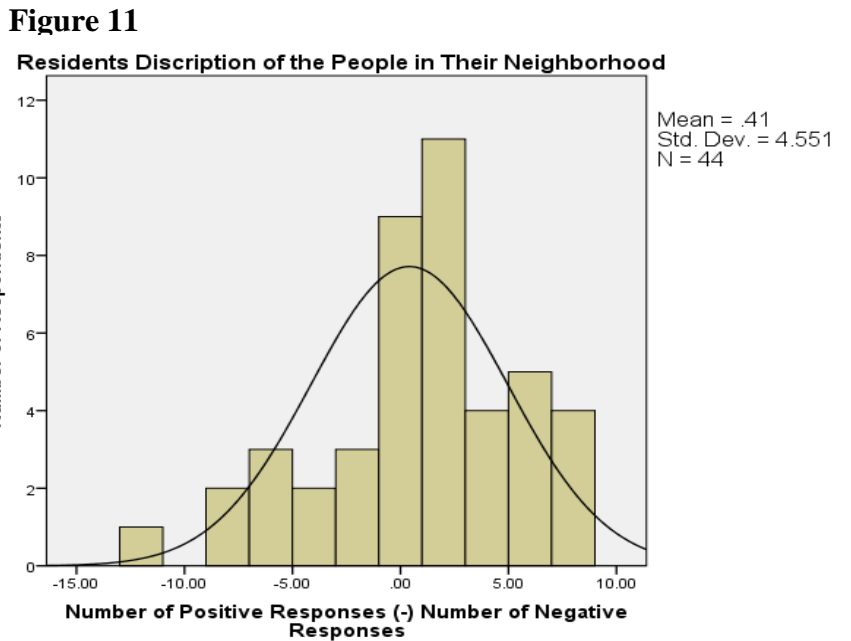Number of Positive Responses (-) Number of Negative Responses

11

Figure 10

Figure 10 shows how many positive minus negative adjectives people circled to describe their neighborhood. Overall, respondents circled more negative adjectives than positive adjectives. The distribution in the graph represents a positively skewed curve, which means that there is larger number of responses to the left (negative responses). The mean is -1.82, which shows that the respondents have a more negative view of the neighborhood than a positive view.

The next histogram (Figure 11) shows these results for how people described the people who live in their neighborhood. Here you can see that mostly all the residents had positive things to say about their neighbors. The distribution in the graph represents a negatively skewed curve, which means that there is a larger number of responses to the right (positive responses), making the left side longer (negative responses). Overall, the mean is +0.41, meaning that the respondents overall have a more positive view of the people than a negative view.

Figure 11

Residents Discription of the People in Their Neighborhood

Mean = .41
Std. Dev. = 4.551
N = 44

Number of Positive Responses (-) Number of Negative Responses

Residents Description of the Conkey and Clifford Neighborhood

Mean = -1.82
Std. Dev. = 5.20
N = 44

Number of Positive Responses (-) Number of Negative Responses

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In summary, most residents felt or viewed the park in a more positive way than negative. Residents also felt or viewed their neighbors in a more positive way, but when it comes to the neighborhood, residents viewed their neighborhood in a more negative way than a positive way.

Residents' Concerns for Their Neighborhood

The next questions asked the residents to list the three top concerns they had for their neighborhood, in ranked order.
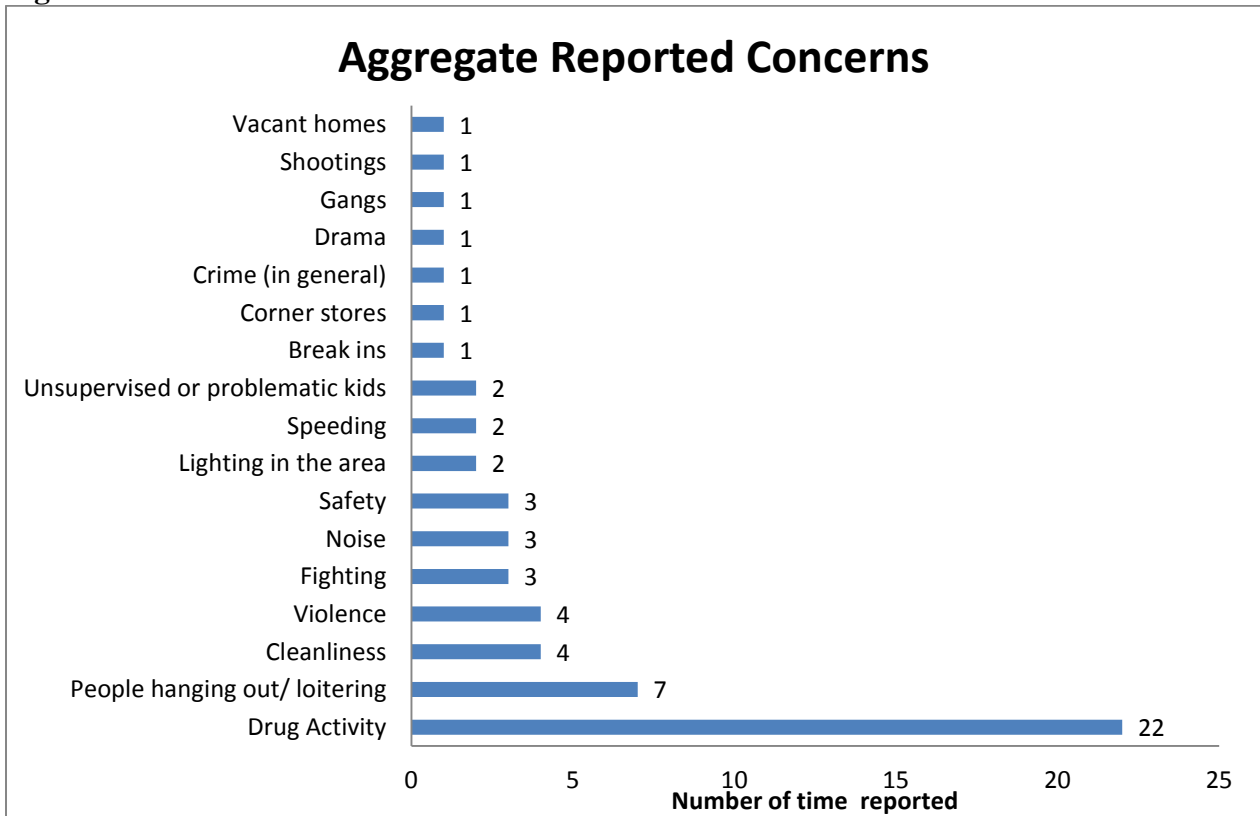
Out of the 44 residents that were surveyed, 24 reported a top concern. By far, the most common top concern was drug activity, with 75% of people listing this. Two respondents reported speeding as their top concern, and cleanliness, people hanging out/loitering, noise, and violence were each reported by one resident as their top concern for their neighborhood.

Then, out of the 44 residents who completed the survey, only 19 reported a second concern. The most common second concerns were people hanging out/loitering and safety. Fighting, noise, and violence were each reported by two (10.5%) residents as their top second concern for their neighborhood.

Finally, 16 residents reported a third top concern for their neighborhood. The third-highest concerns residents listed most commonly were drug activity, unsupervised or problematic kids, cleanliness, and people hanging out/loitering. Gangs, crime, break-ins, and violence were each reported by one resident as their third top concern for their neighborhood

Figure 12 below shows the total number of times residents reported a concern in each of the categories listed, no matter how it was ranked in their list. In total, twenty-four residents listed some concerns. Drug activity is by far the most common concern reported by residents. Seven residents reported people hanging out/loitering as a primary concern, which is possibly associated with the drug market. Overall, the table shows a prevalent concern of drug activity.

Figure 12

Aggregate Reported Concerns

Concern	Number of times reported
Vacant homes	1
Shootings	1
Gangs	1
Drama	1
Crime (in general)	1
Corner stores	1
Break ins	1
Unsupervised or problematic kids	2
Speeding	2
Lighting in the area	2
Safety	3
Noise	3
Fighting	3
Violence	4
Cleanliness	4
People hanging out/ loitering	7
Drug Activity	22

Number of time reported

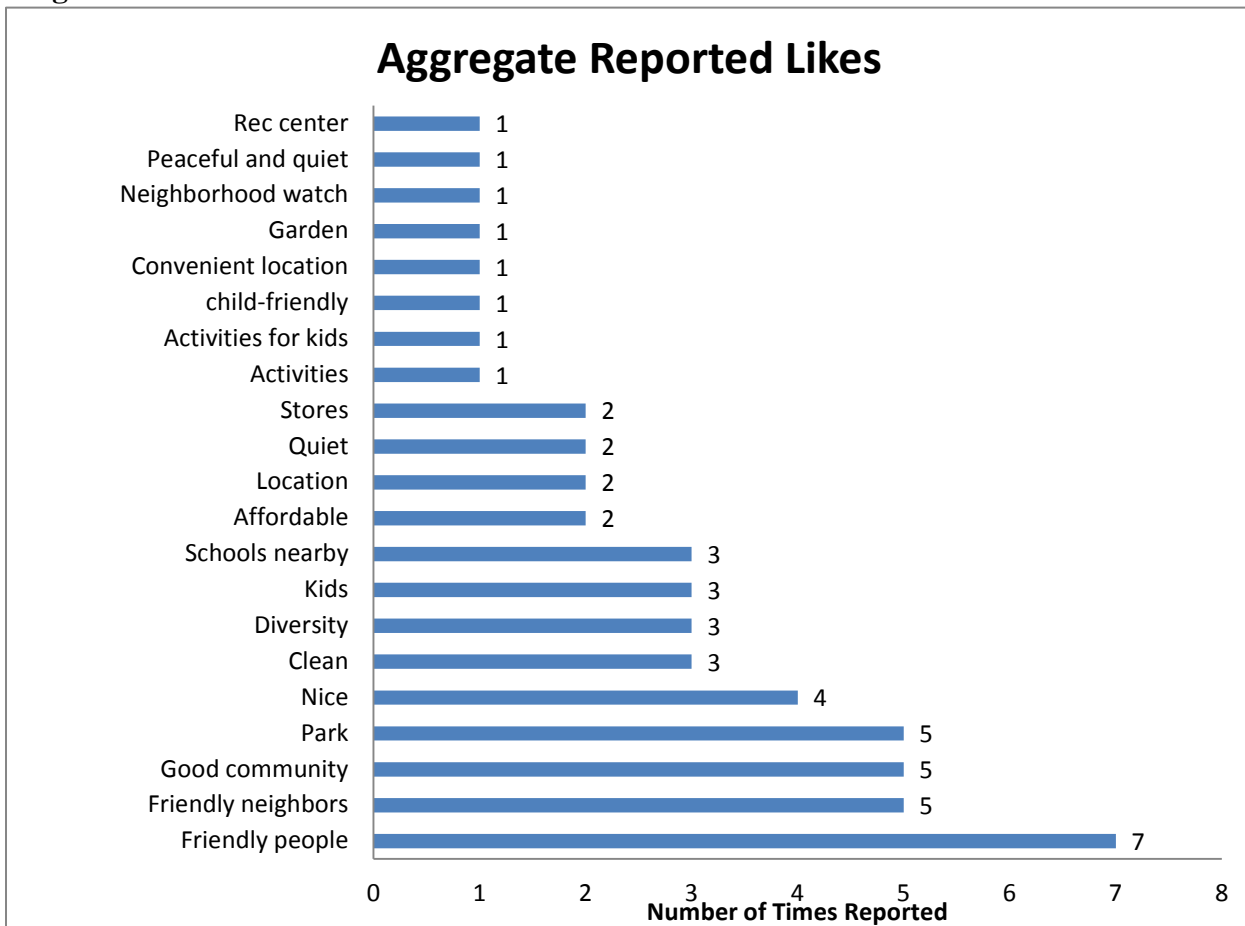**What Residents Like About Their Neighborhood**

Residents were also asked to list the top three attributes that they liked about their neighborhood. Out of 44 residents, 24 listed a top positive attribute. Top-ranked positive features reported by four people were friendly neighbors, friendly people, and the park. Three residents felt the neighborhood was a good community. The neighborhood's cleanliness and location were each reported by two residents. Other aspects like the presence of children, nice, peaceful and quiet, recreation centers, and the school nearby were each reported by one resident.

Eighteen residents reported a second positive thing about their neighborhood. Three people reported diversity, two reported friendly people, it being "nice," and having schools nearby. One resident each listed that they liked the area's activities for kids, affordability, child-friendliness, cleanliness, garden, good community, kids, neighborhood watch, and park.

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Out of 44 residents, 12 reported a third thing that they liked about their neighborhood. Again, these varied widely, but two mentioned quietness, stores, and friendliness as characteristics they liked. Others reported that they like the activities, affordability, geographical convenience, good community, kids, and that it was "nice".

Figure 13 below displays the total number of times each characteristic was mentioned anywhere on the residents' lists. The table shows that residents mostly like the friendly people and neighbors, the good community, and the park. Fewer residents reported liking the recreation center, the garden, activities, activities for kids, child-friendliness, convenience, neighborhood watch, and peace and quiet. Residents also felt that having schools nearby, kids, diversity, cleanliness, and "nice" attributes were things that they liked about their neighborhood.

Figure 13

Implications and Conclusion

Based on the residents' responses, we can conclude that the Conkey and Clifford neighborhood is likely being affected by the open-air marijuana market. This market, which has been identified in the area by the Rochester Police Department for several decades, is entrenched in this community. It likely degrades residents' quality of life and precludes much economic development. Most people who live in the area are renting their homes, and they do not usually stay in the area for more than five years. Residents feel that their neighbors are friendly, but they are deeply concerned about the drug activity in the area. It is plausible that this activity is what drives people out of the community. It is also likely to be what discourages businesses from opening in the area. While some residents reported liking the stores available in the area, these stores are known to struggle with loitering and drug sales issues. Nonetheless, residents felt the area was good for kids and quite a few people reported using and enjoying the recreational facilities in the area.

The Rochester Drug Free Streets Initiative (RDFSI) and other initiatives may be able to work with the Conkey and Clifford residents to improve community cohesion and public safety (such as strengthening the neighborhood watch) while promoting positive use of the area's recreational facilities. Because possession of small amounts of marijuana is decriminalized in New York, it is difficult for policing alone to disturb this long-standing market. Policy and initiatives may be more effective if they are focused on empowering residents and on bringing positive activity (including commercial activity) to the area. This must be done in such a way to protect the safety of businesses and residents. Coordinating activities through community-based organizations may help Conkey and Clifford residents reclaim their community and improve safety.

Appendix: Community Survey 2013

Rochester Drug-Free Street Initiative

Thesis Project Pedro Vazquez

Use of Recreational Facilities/ Park at the Corner of Clifford and Conkey

1. In the past 30 days, how often have you used the following:

	Once	**Several Times**	**Weekly**	**Daily**	**Never**
Conkey Corner Park					
El Camino Trail					
Ave D Recreation Center					
Others Recreation Centers					
Other Parks					

If you use other recreation centers or parks, which ones do you use?

_____

_____

2. Please circle all the adjectives that you think describe the park at the corner of Clifford and Conkey:

Clean	Bright	Exciting	Dark
Noisy	Unsafe	Frightening	Safe
Spacious	Convenient	Welcoming	Inconvenient
Crowded	Deserted	Violent	Cared for
Family-friendly	Boring	Child-friendly	Waste of space
Messy	Fun	Rundown	Useful

Attitudes toward Neighborhood

3. Please circle all the adjectives that apply to this neighborhood:

Friendly	Marijuana	Positive	Exciting
Full of strangers	Neighborly	Strong police presence	Dangerous
Safe	Happy	Prostitution	Good for kids
Loitering	Drug use	Unsafe	Drug sales
Clean	Affordable	Good community bond	Good
Bright	Busy	Hangout	Negative
Weak police presence	Noisy	Quiet	Violent

4. Please circle all the adjectives that describe the people who live in your neighborhood:

Friendly	Unreliable	Helpful	Generous
Dangerous	Law abiding	Mean	Bad
Reliable	Trustworthy	Nosy	Faithful
Responsible	Messy	Respectful	Careless
Drug dealer	Amazing	Distrustful	Hard-working
Noisy	Frightening	Good	Lazy

5. Do you think there are significant problems in the neighborhood?

Yes___

No___

If yes, what are the top three concerns?

1._____ 2._____ 3._____

6. Do you think there are really good things about the neighborhood?

Yes____

No____

If yes, then please list the top three things

1._____ 2._____ 3._____

Household and Respondent Demographics

7. How old are you? _____

8. What gender are you?
Male___
Female___

9. How long have you lived in the area? _____

10. Do you rent or own the home? _____