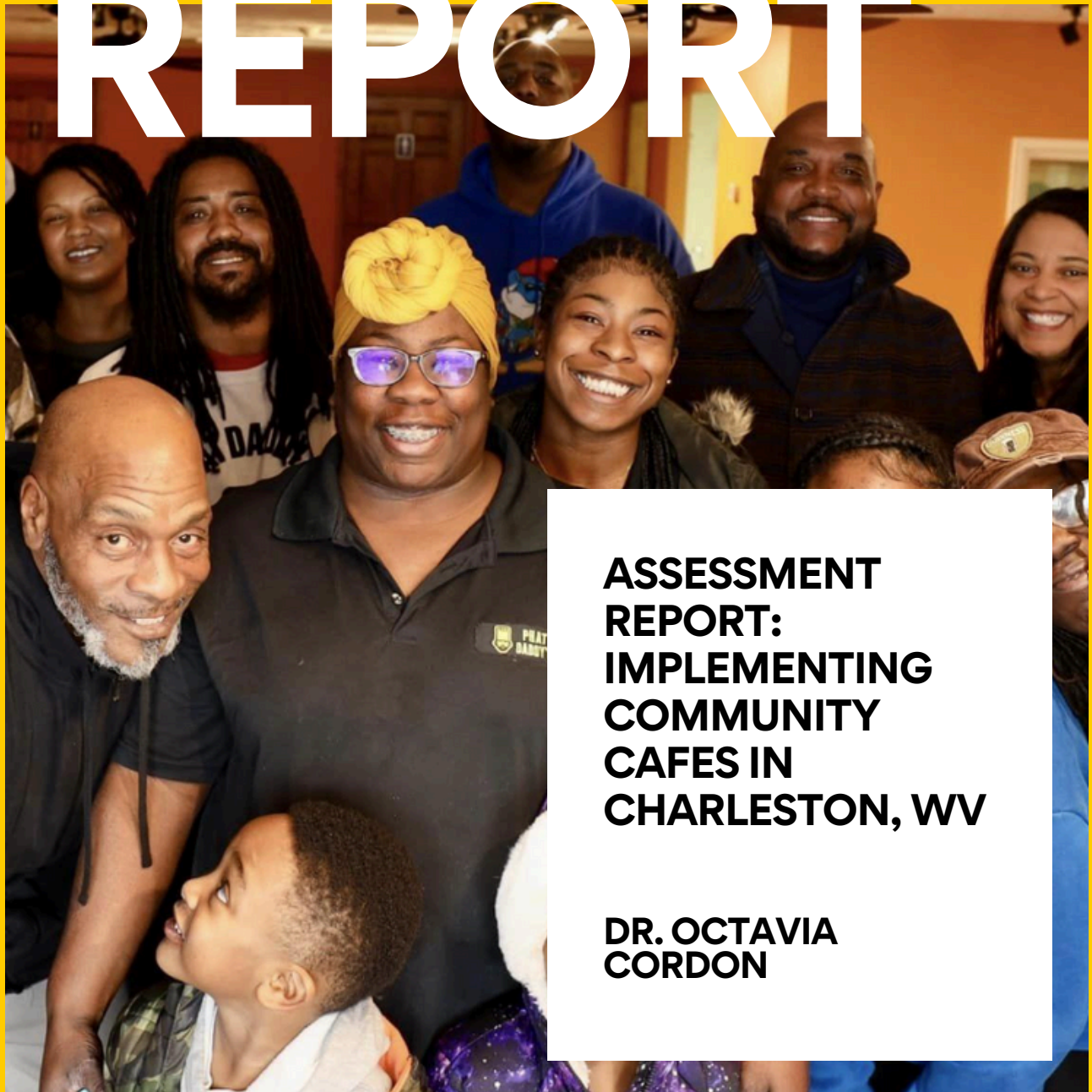


ASPIRE ACHIEVEMENT PROJECT

REIMAGINE YOUR COMMUNITY FINAL

REPORT



**ASSESSMENT
REPORT:
IMPLEMENTING
COMMUNITY
CAFES IN
CHARLESTON, WV**

**DR. OCTAVIA
CORDON**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MEET DR.
CORDON 3

INTRODUCTION 4

OBJECTIVES 5

BENEFITS OF THE
COMMUNITY
CAFES 6

CURRENT STATE
ANALYSIS 7

SWOT ANALYSIS 8

STEPS
IMPLEMENTED
FOR COMMUNITY
CAFES SPACES 9

ONGOING
IMPLEMENTATION
PLAN 10

CONCLUSION 11

MEET DR. CORDON



**DR. OCTAVIA
CORDON**

Program Director, ASPIRE

ASPIRE set out to create an experience the Westside of Charleston has never experienced. Dr. Cordon, Program Director saw a need to bring the community together to not only learn but offer a shared approach on working together to solve problems. Community Cafes would be more than just places to grab a cup of coffee; but serve as social hubs that foster community engagement, support local businesses, and provide opportunities for social and economic development. Implementing Community Cafes in Charleston, WV, would bring numerous benefits to the area.



INTRODUCTION

COMMUNITY CAFES

Community Cafes are social enterprises that provide more than just food and beverages; they serve as gathering places that foster community spirit, support local economies, and promote social inclusion. This assessment report evaluates the feasibility and potential impact of implementing community cafes in Charleston, WV.

MISSION STATEMENT

ASPIRE's mission is to strengthen youth and their communities through preventive programming that fosters enrichment, reduces harmful behaviors, and builds pathways to long-term stability. This is done through personal development programming that increase exposure to enrichment opportunities and decreases at-risk behaviors that lead to health illnesses, obesity, drug abuse, incarceration, suicide, and economic instability.

OBJECTIVES

Social Connectivity:

Enhance social cohesion by providing a welcoming space for residents to gather.

Economic Support:

Boost the local economy through job creation and support for local farmers business owners and suppliers.

Cultural Enrichment:

Foster cultural exchange and community pride through diverse programming and events.

Health and Wellness:

Promote healthier lifestyles through, education, nutritious food options and community events.





BENEFITS OF THE COMMUNITY CAFES

Social Cohesion: Community Cafes provided a space for people to gather, socialize, and build relationships, strengthening the social fabric of the community.

Economic Development: By sourcing ingredients locally and employing residents, community cafes would stimulate the local economy and create job opportunities and partnerships.

Health and Well-being: Offered healthy food options and promoting a balanced lifestyle can improve the overall health and well-being of the community. Example: hosted cooking demonstrations in partnership with WVU Kanawha County Extension Office in addition to events that provide wellness activities with WV Health Right Wellness Center and local Fitness Instructors.

Cultural Exchange: The Community Cafes served as cultural hubs where people from diverse backgrounds come together, share experiences, and celebrate local traditions.

CURRENT STATE ANALYSIS

CHARLESTON, WV

Charleston, WV, has a vibrant community with a mix of urban and suburban areas. There are existing cafes and restaurants, but there is potential to expand the concept of community-focused establishments. Key factors to consider include:

DEMOGRAPHICS

Charleston has a diverse population with varying income levels and cultural backgrounds, making it important to cater to a wide range of needs and preferences.

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The local economy is in recovery, with opportunities for growth in small businesses and community initiatives.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL ISSUES

There is a growing interest in agriculture, healthy living and social engagement, which community cafes can and will address.



SWOT ANALYSIS

* STRENGTHS

- Strong sense of community
- Existing local suppliers and farmers
- Interest in social enterprises
- Potential for partnerships with local organizations, businesses and City Governments

* WEAKNESSES

- Initial funding and investment required
- Lack of State government support
- Limited support for homeless

* OPPORTUNITIES

- Revitalization of underused spaces
- Community support and engagement
- Health and wellness trends
- Cultural and educational programming

* THREATS

- Economic fluctuations changing
- Consumer preferences
- Regulatory challenges

STEPS IMPLEMENTED FOR COMMUNITY CAFES SPACES

IDENTIFIED LOCATIONS

We chose accessible and central locations that were easily reachable by the community. Community Centers, Churches and a Restaurant.

ENGAGED THE COMMUNITY

We involved local residents in the planning process to ensure the Cafe meets their needs and preferences. During meetings, we had poster boards to collect feedback from residents on concerns and other topics for their choice to discuss.

SOURCED LOCALLY

We partnered with local suppliers and developers to provide fresh, high quality ingredients for meals.

OFFERED DIVERSE MENU OPTIONS

We included a variety of food and beverage options to cater to different tastes, cultural and dietary needs.

CREATED A WELCOMING ATMOSPHERE

We designed the Cafe to be cozy and inviting, with comfortable seating and a pleasant ambiance. We also included various wellness activities. Those included painting, making bath bombs, offering massages, cooking demos, yoga and more.



PROMOTED COMMUNITY EVENTS

We hosted events such as wellness cafes, live music, workout and art classes to attract a diverse audience and create a vibrant community space.

SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES

We implemented eco-friendly practices such as composting, recycling, and using energy-efficient appliances. We were able to receive materials from the City of Charleston and the Sanitary Board with resources about being practical about recycling to create a cleaner neighborhood.



ONGOING IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

1. Location Selection

- Identify more accessible and central locations in Charleston that are visible and easy to reach for all community members.

2. Community Engagement

- Conduct surveys and focus groups to gather input from residents about their needs and preferences.
- Involve more local organizations and stakeholders in the planning and implementation process.

3. Sustainable Fundraising Model

- Develop a sustainable fundraising model that includes revenue from marketing and merchandise sales, event hosting, and community partnerships.
- Consider a social enterprise structure that reinvests profits into community programs.

4. Programming and Events

- Host regular community events such as workshops, cultural celebrations, and wellness programs to engage different segments of the population.
- Collaborate with local artists, musicians, and educators to provide diverse and enriching experiences.

5. Marketing and Outreach

- Develop a marketing strategy that highlights the community-focused mission of the Cafes.
- Increase use of social media, local media, and community events to raise awareness and attract visitors.

CONCLUSION



Implementing Community Cafes in Charleston, WV, has the potential to significantly enhance social cohesion, support the local economy, and promote health and wellness. Community Cafes can have a transformative impact on the community by fostering social connections, supporting local businesses, and promoting a healthy lifestyle. By addressing the needs and preferences of the community, leveraging local resources, and offering a diverse range of services and programming, Community Cafes can become vital hubs of connection and engagement. With continued support Charleston can create a vibrant community hub that brings people together and enhances the quality of life for its residents.

ReImagine Appalachia and ReImagine Your Community

ReImagine Appalachia is a coalition of over 200 labor, business, faith, climate groups and elected officials who have come together to build a 21st-century sustainable economy that is good for workers, communities, and the environment. We work primarily in Appalachia's Ohio River Valley, which includes under-resourced communities in Southeastern Ohio, Southwestern Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Northern Kentucky. Together, we found common ground, created a collective vision for a 21st century sustainable, equitable Appalachia and developed what is essentially a climate action blueprint for how to get there.

The ReImagine Your Community (RYC) Visioning Session Project is an initiative born out of the desire to support bottom-up, collective visioning for a sustainable, equitable economy. Through the RYC initiative, ReImagine Appalachia has brought together eight community leaders from across the region for a series of collaborative monthly meetings on skills and topical-based training. Each cohort member was tasked with outlining 3-5 projects by using our ReImagine Your Community Toolkit– a step-by-step guide designed to help folks tap into the power of community collaboration and develop new visions for their communities.

To learn more about the RYC initiative and how
you can get involved, visit:.

<https://reimagineappalachia.org/reimagine-your-community/>

or scan here

