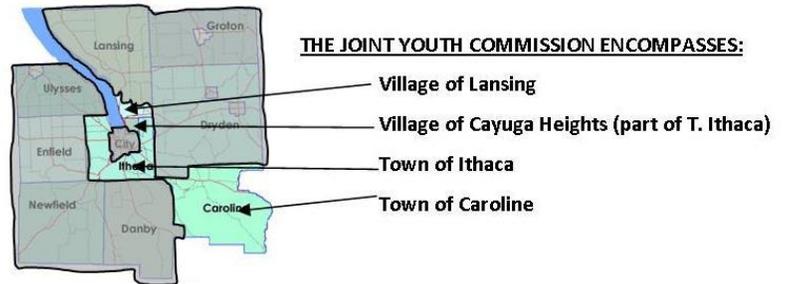


2018 Joint Youth Commission Youth Needs Assessment

The Joint Youth Commission (JYC) recommends how local funds should be allocated to address the needs of youth living in the Town of Ithaca, Town of Caroline, Village of Cayuga Heights and Village of Lansing. The JYC has two program priorities: employment training, career exploration, apprenticeships and first-time youth employment; and youth development and life skills.



In 2017-18, the JYC conducted its most recent needs assessment to understand the needs of youth in the community and update and inform its priorities and funding. Please see “Process” section at the end of this document for details on how the assessment was conducted. Our primary feedback came from 400 youth and 65 adults who responded to a survey targeting residents of the JYC communities. Additional demographics on respondents can be found on page 6.

Best things about our community for young people, ages 10-18

Youth	Adults
Schools/teachers/school offerings – 56%	Many and diverse youth-focused programs – 41%
Supportive community/caring adults – 51%	Natural resources/outdoors/parks – 39%
Many activities/festivals/sports – 38%	Schools (including clubs and sports) – 29%
Many community resources – 33%	Supportive community/caring adults – 25%
Local businesses – 28%	Public libraries – 20%
Natural resources/outdoors/parks – 19%	Safety – 14%

Youth and adults identified many of the same community assets, though they ranked them differently. Youth were twice as likely as adults to mention that the community is supportive of young people. Both noted availability of many activities aimed at young people and both groups noted our many outdoor parks and natural resources. Youth and adults also both cited good schools and school extracurriculars such as sports and clubs as benefits they appreciate. 28% of youth mentioned specific local businesses (Ithaca Mall and the Commons were most common) as things they appreciate about the community. One in five adults and 6% of youth noted the public libraries as community assets.

Quotes about our community’s best things

Youth	Adults
<i>We have many opportunities to pursue our interests</i>	<i>School and club sports, keeping youth active and promoting healthy lifestyles</i>
<i>We have a very good environment for active play</i>	<i>Fantastic access to some beautiful outdoor locations</i>
<i>How fun our community is and I never get bored</i>	<i>Access to local university and college</i>

<i>The welcoming of all kids of all genders and sexualities. Most everyone is accepting of who you are.</i>	<i>They can still spend time in the great outdoors without too much fear of getting hurt when they venture into their community.</i>
<i>The variety of courses offered at the high school and the amount of club sports teams.</i>	<i>Community emphasis on art, music and performance</i>
<i>I love the openness of the community</i>	<i>Caring school systems where kids feel they belong</i>
<i>Safe environment to hang out with friends in public</i>	<i>Relative openness to diversity</i>
<i>People are really nice and don't judge you.</i>	<i>Having a voice</i>
<i>We have lots of fun programs for children, teens, and adults</i>	<i>Local government that worries about and supports youth</i>
<i>People try their best to help us</i>	<i>Multicultural and international exposure</i>
<i>Nearby parks and nature areas</i>	<i>Active community with a lot going on</i>
<i>Nice, kind people around the school</i>	<i>Experiences to learn what the work environment is like</i>

What would you change to make our community a better place for young people, ages 10-18?

Youth	Adults
School (improve climate, less homework, more clubs, change curriculum) – 42%	More youth programs & activities/better outreach – 94%
More youth programs & activities/better outreach – 41%	Improve social justice/services/transportation/affordability – 31%
Improve community climate & safety – 27%	School (more clubs, better curriculum, more support for stress) – 30%
Improve social justice/services/transportation/affordability of services – 23%	Safe, supervised places for kids to hang out – 30%
Better businesses (better mall, better Commons, more stores and restaurants) – 19%	Better businesses/more welcoming to youth – 26%
More parks, gardens, recreation facilities, playgrounds – 18%	More youth jobs/programs to build job skills & apprenticeships – 19%
Safe, supervised places for kids to hang out – 11%	Improve community climate & safety – 15%
More youth jobs/programs to build job skills – 5%	Increase funding for youth programs – 11%

Adults and youth agree that there is a need for more programs, activities and hang out places for young people. Nearly 1 in 5 young people mentioned wanting more outdoor parks and areas to play; this was not mentioned at all by adults.

Adults were far more likely than young people to list youth jobs and job skill building as a need. This may be because 64% of the youth survey respondents were 13 or younger; a job may not be a current priority. In contrast, 60% of adult respondents with children living at home have children 14 and older.

Quotes about how to improve our community

Youth	Adults
<i>A greater variety of programs</i>	<i>Increased availability of varied afterschool programs, at affordable price, and with minimal transportation needs</i>
<i>Better dealing with bullies (stricter punishments)</i>	<i>More support for stress in school</i>

<i>More activities for larger age ranges (middle school and high school)</i>	<i>Programs need to be advertised earlier and better. People already have plans when they are announced.</i>
<i>Better school food and multiple lunch lines and cashiers</i>	<i>More opportunity to volunteer to help the community. More community service built into school curriculum.</i>
<i>Cool stuff on the Commons. Activities at the Mall.</i>	<i>Create a game room/coffee shop with lounge chairs and music to hang out in on the Commons.</i>
<i>Fewer restrictions on driving permits</i>	<i>It is difficult to find activities for the older teen.</i>
<i>Have reliable people to drive home (if no late bus)</i>	<i>More money for youth centered programs</i>
<i>I would make more kid-friendly places for teens to hang out</i>	<i>More places for kids and teens to hang out</i>
<i>More non-competitive sports teams</i>	<i>Arrange for live music listening opportunities geared toward youth</i>
<i>More transportation for towns surrounding Ithaca City</i>	<i>Better/more frequent public transportation, including for youth beyond the bus line</i>
<i>People under 14 should be able to get a job</i>	<i>Increased summer employment opportunities</i>
<i>Tutoring available during lunch/study hall</i>	<i>Classes to teach youth life skills that they may not learn at home</i>

Participation in extracurricular activities

70% of youth reported that in the past year they participated in one or more extracurricular activity, offered either by the school or in the community. The most common activity types were sports, academic, theater/arts/music, clubs, and volunteering.

For those young people who did not participate, the most common reasons they gave were (more than 1 answer possible):

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Don't see activities that interest me – 48% | Transportation – 19% |
| Need to get home to do homework – 37% | Don't know about activities – 19% |
| None of my friends participate – 26% | Cost – 19% |
| Not offered at convenient time – 25% | |

For which age group are there the fewest opportunities and greatest need?

Youth	Adults
Elementary school age – 56%	Elementary school age – 12%
Middle school age – 35%	Middle school age – 52%
High school age – 10%	High school age – 37%

Respondents who ranked as “Good” or “Great” the community’s availability of ...

	Youth	Adults
Employment opportunities for young people	62%	14%
After-school/weekend activities for young people	65%	22%
Places for young people to hang out	42%	9%
Volunteer/community involvement opportunities	40%	40%

The opinions of youth and adults about the availability of services and opportunities for young people varied greatly. Youth ranked availability much higher than adults did. As noted earlier in this report, the young average age of youth respondents may have impacted their perception.

Adults only feedback

The adult survey included a few questions that were not included on the youth survey. A few quotes are representative of their responses to these questions:

Strengths and skills of community youth, ages 10-18

"Tech savvy. Energy. Curiosity."

"Willingness to engage in community activities. Care for their neighbors."

"I see the area youth have a great sense of pride in their community. They are interested in the environment and the area farm lands. They engage well with each other and adults. There is also a genuine friendliness within the community and with visitors. The youth are smart and caring."

"They care about other people, they see the value of volunteer work, they are intelligent and thoughtful, and they want to make a difference in the world."

Challenges facing youth, ages 10-18, in our community

"In a world of gadgets and experiences that are focused on the individual, creating experiences of team building and finding community."

"Part time job opportunities, lack of mentors, limited public transportation in outlying areas."

"Too many are anxious and depressed about our planet and our country – worried about money, sucked into technology."

"Cyber bullying and unsafe use of technology."

"They face a lot of pressure with homework. They are not immune to the general anxiety and lack of connection in our culture."

Feedback on the JYC focus on first-time youth jobs, job training and career exploration

"I think that it is right on target, though probably not enough businesses are on board."

"Youth should be encouraged to explore a variety of interests and given multiple opportunities to explore their desired career interests as they evolve."

"In a perfect world, it would be great to support second- and third-time jobs, etc. as well."

"It's valuable but not the only need. They need safe social opportunities. Mentors. Access to public transportation."

"Jobs for youth are not as important as the skills to build a healthy social and emotional life."

Conclusions

Funding priorities should continue to support:

- ~ Work readiness programs that build job skills and provide subsidized employment
- ~ Youth development programs that build life skills through varied activities

Target audience should remain on:

- ~ Youth in late elementary school, to help with a successful transition to middle school
- ~ Middle schoolers, including those referred by school personnel as needing additional support
- ~ Early high schoolers, to help with first time employment and job skills

Additional steps the JYC will take:

- ~ Share results of the needs assessment with JYC municipalities
- ~ Share results with funded agencies and draw attention to programming suggestions
- ~ Share transportation-related suggestions with ICSD, TCAT, Way2Go
- ~ Encourage funded agencies to increase outreach efforts and to advertise programs and services earlier, including using their own and JYC's social media for this purpose

Needs assessment process

The JYC reviewed and collected information in these ways:

- ~ reviewed available data related to JYC area with a specific focus on youth data

[See T. Caroline profile](#), [T. Ithaca profile](#), [T. Lansing profile](#) and selected data on P. 7

- ~ asked programs funded by JYC for feedback on trends they have noticed concerning youth

Program staff provided their feedback during regular reports to the JYC.

- ~ surveyed young people of middle and high school age from JYC communities (400 responses).

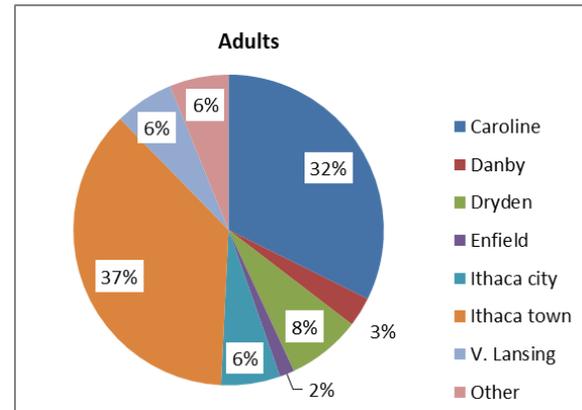
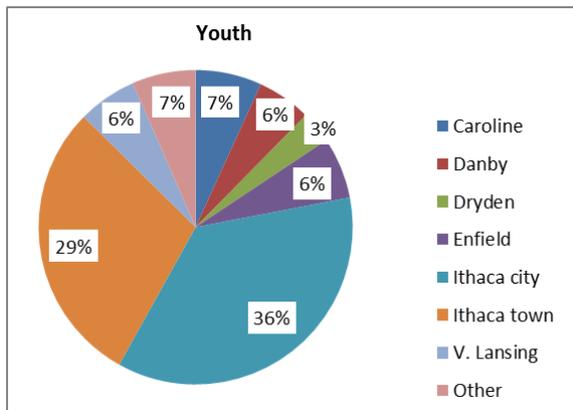
The survey was available on-line and in hard copy. A JYC representative visited the lunchrooms at Boynton, DeWitt, Ithaca High, and Lehman Alternative Community School with a candy incentive to entice students to complete the survey in fall, 2017.

- ~ surveyed parents and other community adults residing in JYC communities (65 responses)

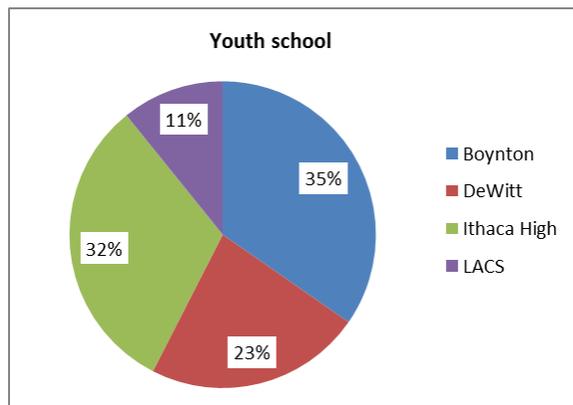
The survey was available on-line and in hard copy in fall, 2017. It was advertised widely through websites, list serves, newspapers, and community newsletters. In addition, funded programs invited youth and families to participate.

Participant demographics

Survey respondents' municipality of residence

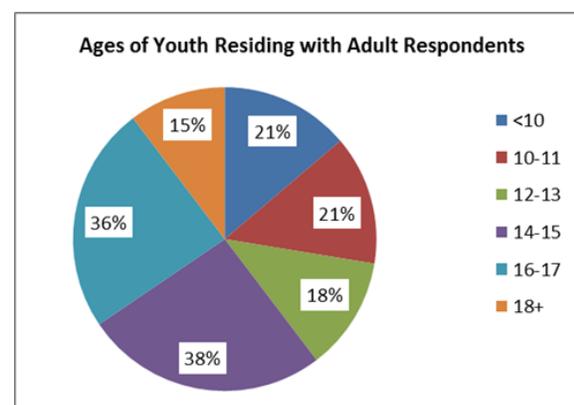
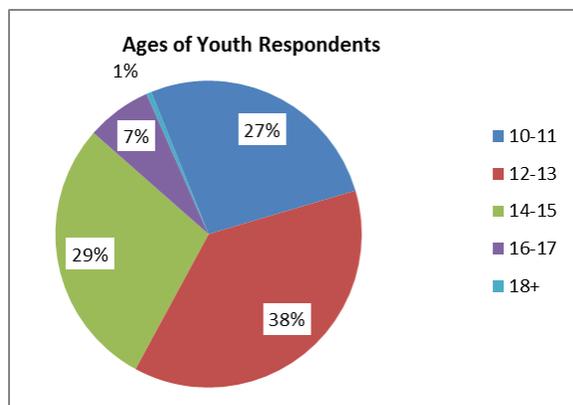


45% of youth respondents and 77% of adult respondents reside in one of the JYC municipalities. The JYC decided to include all responses in its assessment since many people, especially youth, are often not clear on their municipality of residence. Many chose "City of Ithaca" since they have an Ithaca mailing address but may not reside in the City. In addition, the needs of youth who attend school and hang out together are likely to be very similar, regardless of where they actually reside.



There were no responses from home schoolers, New Roots or other schools. We had greater participation from middle school age youth (63%) than high school age (37%). (left)

60% of adult respondents have young people living with them. We had more responses from households with high school-age youth than middle school-age youth. (below)



JYC youth population, 0-17

	Caroline	T. Ithaca*	V. Cayuga Hts.	V. Lansing	Total JYC
Age 0-4	169	698	258	188	1,313
Age 5-9	256	643	78	219	1,196
Age 10-14	100	606	96	145	947
Age 15-17	154	359	79	35	627
Total 0-17	679	2,306	511	587	4,083

Data Source: American Community Survey, 2012-16 5 Year Estimates, Table DP05

*Town of Ithaca population above does not include V. Cayuga Heights which is listed separately.

The majority (though not all) of JYC youth reside in the Ithaca City School District.

JYC youth served

	JYC funded programs	CYS funded agencies	Recreation Partnership*
2015	290	228	1,766
2016	254	181	1,992
2017	321	398**	Not yet available

Data source: Agency annual reports

*Recreation Partnership numbers are registrations, not unduplicated people

**Sixty-three youth served by the Ithaca Youth Bureau Youth Employment Service are counted in both JYC funded programs and County Youth Services (CYS) funded agency numbers.



Joint Youth Commission 2018 members and liaisons

Kris Bennett	Liaison, Tompkins Co.	Ronny Hardaway	V. Lansing
Rich DePaolo	Liaison, T. Ithaca	Evie Karnes	T. Ithaca
Rachel Eginton	Youth	Lorraine Moran	T. Ithaca
John Fracchia	Liaison, T. Caroline	Karyn Scott	T. Caroline
Sandie Grooms	At-large	Christianne White	T. Ithaca

Report prepared by Kris Bennett, liaison from Tompkins County Youth Services Dept. to the JYC

For more information about the Joint Youth Commission or to inquire about serving on this advisory group, please contact: Evie Karnes, JYC chair, ekarnes22@gmail.com.

This report and an executive summary may be found at www.tompkinscountyny.gov/youth/publications