



COMMUNITY STUDY

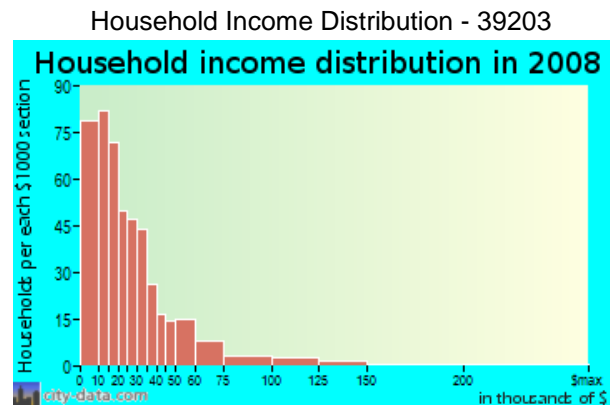
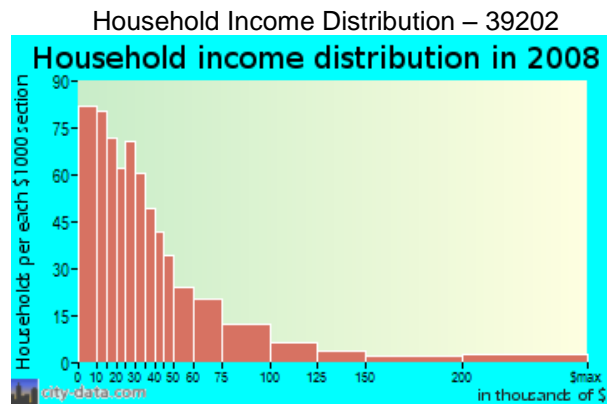
Mid-Jackson, MS, Neighborhood

The Mid-Jackson Neighborhood consists of three distinct areas within the city of Jackson in central Mississippi: Midtown, Mid-City, and Georgetown, which specifically encompasses the 39202 and 39203 zip codes. Mid-town began the Excel By 5 certification as a population level three community in the fall of 2006 and completed the final requirements of the process in the summer of 2009.

Demographics

General Characteristics	39202	39203	Total
Total Population	8,830	9,593	18,423
Male	4,359	4,653	9,012
Female	4,471	4,940	9,411
Under Age 5	560	677	1,237
18 Years & Over	6,926	7,204	14,130
65 Years & Over	848	905	1,753

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000



Source: www.city-data.com

PROCESS

In the fall of 2006, the Walker Foundation began the process of seeking Excel By 5 early childhood community certification for the Midtown neighborhood of Jackson. After meeting with community leaders from the area with vested interests in early childhood development, a decision was made to extend the area to include the Mid-City and Georgetown Neighborhoods. This would allow for the consolidation of resources, which would ultimately offer the opportunity to have a greater impact for these populations.

Beginning in early 2007, a coalition was formed with Good Samaritan Midtown serving as the Lead Agency and the role of the Certification Manager was filled by a local afterschool program director. The first coalition members were divided into four demonstration areas and, in these small groups, helped collect pertinent data as part of the community needs assessment and with this started on the development of their action plan. During this time, Mid-Jackson also formed a Steering Committee, comprised of the Demonstration Area Chairs, the Certification Manager, and a representative from the Walker Foundation. After the Steering Committee met, it was determined that the executive director of Good Samaritan Midtown would be a better fit for the role of the Certification Manager, allowing for more distributed leadership among the coalition.

The process of certification was an enlightening one in that it provided the community with the opportunity and means to conduct a full assessment of the community resources and determine from a grass roots perspective the true needs of the target families. It was through this process that the coalition recognized that a large percentage of the families living in the Mid-Jackson area were not utilizing the early childhood centers identified as partners with the certification; thus, it was left to determine what service, if any was being utilized by the families in efforts to ensure the early development needs were indeed being met. Upon further investigation, it was determined that the children were not actually at childcare centers but in the homes either with parents (mostly mothers) or other family members. Understanding the dynamics of this and the potential opportunities, Mid-Jackson elected to incorporate a home based education program, entitled Healthy Families America.

As the process continued, the state Excel by 5 program conducted a comprehensive review on the seven early childhood centers that agreed to participate in the certification process to determine the number of qualified staff as measured by training hours and childcare credentialing. From this data, Mid-Jackson was able to put a plan in place that would address the needed training hours as well as assist those centers in need of additional CDA (child development associate) staff. Through this plan and the cooperation of partnering centers, the minimum requirement was not only met but also exceeded. Beyond fulfilling the final review and meeting the requirements, Mid-Jackson had six additional teacher assistants between two childcare centers that went on to obtain their CDA within six months of initiating the CDA program.

While the process of certification spanned almost three years, Mid-Jackson used this time to not only put together a strong committed coalition that adopted a plan of action, but also to implement activities and develop programs that would reflect community based efforts thus encouraging long term “buy in” from the residents.

The Mid-Jackson Coalition continues to meet quarterly at noon with a luncheon provided. These meetings are used for the Demonstration Area chairs to report to the whole coalition on the continued efforts in the four essential areas. In addition, the Certification Manager uses this opportunity to brief the coalition on relevant information relating to any movement made on behalf of early childhood at all levels to include local, state and federal. Also, the Coalition uses this time to discuss additional partnerships that might be beneficial to the Mid-Jackson efforts.

OUTCOMES FROM THE FOUR AREAS OF FOCUS

Over the past three years, Mid-Jackson has worked diligently to develop a broad coalition of business, religious, and government leaders that either serve the neighborhood and/or live in the neighborhood. Mid-Jackson has secured strong commitments and active participation from many local community service groups, early care center directors and staff, and local health care providers. They continue to pursue partnerships that will create stronger ties in the ultimate goal of pursuing and structuring social change as it relates to supporting those early years which we know are most critical in a child's development.

Beyond the efforts of establishing a sound leadership base for the coalition, Mid-Jackson has transformed their local community by developing and adapting events that have a focus on young children, increasing programs and services for families, improving communication among staff from child care centers and Head Starts, increasing training opportunities for early care providers, and increasing access to health screenings, nutrition education, and transportation safety checks. The following are some specific examples:

- The annual "National Night Out" was adapted to coincide with a community Health Fair with health screenings for children and adults, car seat checks, and information on nutritional practices that prevent childhood obesity.
- A "Roving Reading Trolley" was rented to visit Mid-Jackson childcare centers bringing educational resources to the neighborhood. During trolley visits, children were given various age appropriate books in efforts to initiate the establishment of a home library.
- In 2008, the Mid-Jackson Family Resource Center was established in efforts to bring new educational resources to the neighborhood. The resource center includes a space for meetings and workshops, computers and tools for preparing educational materials, and a toy and resource lending library for parents, childcare providers, and other community members. In 2010, the Mid-Jackson Resource Center was transformed into one of the Mississippi Childcare Resource and Referral Network centers.
- New educational offerings for parents included the hosting of a new parent training series and the recruitment and training of local volunteers to be Parents As Teachers facilitators.
- Newborn packets have been provided to families in the neighborhoods with educational resources, a newly developed Mid-Jackson Resource Guide with information about local services, and a reply card to sign up for regular newsletters.
- Initial reviews indicated that 22% of centers in Mid-Jackson have staff with 20 or more clock-hours of professional development training per licensure year. The coalition worked on strategies to increase training opportunities in the neighborhood and used a centralized training calendar to increase communication about local trainings that have been scheduled to encourage more providers and centers to meet the certification requirements.

- The initial reviews also indicated that 44% of centers in Mid-Jackson met the certification requirements for highly trained staff, those with credentials of a CDA, AA, BA, or beyond in early childhood, education, and/or a related field. Beyond the initial review, six additional teacher assistants obtained their CDA within a six-month period.
- In addition, as part of the Excel By 5 certification process, classrooms in six early childhood centers in Mid-Jackson underwent a comprehensive environmental rating. As a follow up, these centers received technical assistance to encourage and enhance developmentally appropriate practices to improve the quality of care provided for children ages birth to 5 years.
- Mid-Jackson has developed several strategies to increase access to developmental screenings for children in the neighborhood. In addition to basic developmental screenings being provided at the Family Resource Center, the home visitation program “Healthy Families America” conducts screenings inside the home. Beyond providing the screenings, the Family Resource Center distributes informational packets detailing the importance of early screenings as well as some baseline parameters for average development.

COMMUNITY’S UNIQUE FEATURES IMPACTING CERTIFICATION EFFORTS

Challenges:

- Mid-Jackson lacks one point of referral for families living in the 39202 & 39203 zip codes. For instance, families use a variety of health and human resources, i.e. local hospitals (3+), health clinics, health departments, various Department of Human Services (DHS) offices, etc.
- Mid-Jackson has a large number of people participating in the coalition who work in the area and have a vested interest in the neighborhood, however, do not actually live in the neighborhood. This requires the coalition to work harder to ensure the active participation of residents on the coalition and to ensure that coalition activities are acceptable and desired—not only by those who work in the neighborhood—but also by those who live there.

Assets:

- Mid-Jackson, as a neighborhood in the capitol city, has access to a number of resources that exceed those available in the majority of communities around the state, including state-level resource centers rather than smaller satellite offices.
- The Mid-Jackson Neighborhood mainly consists of housing with more limited businesses and industry than similar population-sized towns. In addition, there are more restricted ranges of incomes and education levels than are typically found in most cities, making Mid-Jackson a more homogenous population.
- Mid-Jackson has established clear boundaries that can be easily identified on a city map. Specifically, the area covers two zip codes... 39202 & 39203.
- Mid-Jackson has access to phenomenal philanthropic and education leaders who are committed to making early childhood a topic of focus.
- Mid-Jackson is home to various non-profits who are committed to improving the quality of life for families living within the targeted area. These non-profits provide services ranging from food, shelter, clothing to educational support for both parents (i.e. GED) and children.
- Mid-Jackson is centrally located among three universities... Jackson State University, Belhaven College and Millsaps College.