



ENVISIONING AN ALBANIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY CENTER IN WORCESTER

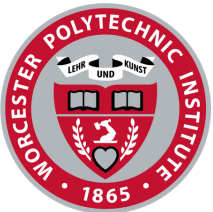
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Savannah Parker

ENVISIONING AN ALBANIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY CENTER IN WORCESTER

An Interactive Qualifying
Project
submitted to the Faculty of
WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC
INSTITUTE
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
degree of Bachelor of Science

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11 December 2020



WPI

Report Submitted to:
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Albanian Cultural Heritage Center
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Worcester Polytechnic Institute

This report represents the work of four WPI undergraduate students submitted to the faculty as evidence of completion of a degree requirement. WPI routinely publishes these reports on its web site without editorial or peer review. The opinions presented in this report do not necessarily represent the opinions of WPI. For more information about the projects program at WPI, see <http://www.wpi.edu/Academics/Projects>

Abstract

Worcester's Albanian American community is a vibrant community, yet it lacks a community center featuring cultural events and social programs. The goal of the project was to envision a digital community center. To accomplish this goal, we conducted key informant interviews and analyzed the literature on physical and virtual community centers and program design. The team completed the Social Blueprint Business Design Framework for an online community center and beta-tested an *Ask Your Grandparents* program to support an online community center's formation.



Acknowledgments

We would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone who made this project and experience possible for us. Although we were not able to go to Albania, we were still able to learn about the Albanian culture with the Albanian American community in Worcester.

- WPI's Interdisciplinary & Global Studies Department
- Professor Leslie Dodson, our project advisor
- Professor Robert Hersh, our project advisor
- The Albanian Cultural Heritage Center along with Tomi & Edlira Stefani, our sponsors
- Professor Peter Christopher
- MAASBESA's Sokol Lushllari and Mark Kosmo
- Greg Steffon
- Valerie Kerxhalli & The St. Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church
- Deni Hoxha
- Edlira Avdulla
- Etel Haxhiaj
- Orion Stavre
- Polikseni Manxhari
- Gerta Gjata & Noa Preci
- Elvira Stefani
- Brent Stefani
- Bahnan's Bakery & International Marketplace
- Paige Neumann, our WPI Librarian
- The Worcester Albanian American Community



Lakror and baklava from our online cooking class

Executive Summary

There are currently more than 20,000 Albanian Americans residing in Worcester, representing one of the largest immigrant communities in the city. However, with numerous waves of immigration, it is sometimes challenging for earlier generations of Albanian immigrants and more-recent arrivals to integrate socially. As with many immigrant cultures, heterogeneity in the Albanian population in Worcester is also a challenge to community building (OECD, 2019). The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has severely limited or stopped community programs and activities entirely, making community-building even more difficult.

Online communication has transformed the idea of community. The definition of community has changed over the years from people living in the same place to a network of interpersonal relationships due to the introduction of new means of communication, such as the internet (Wellman et al., 2002). Online

communities present many benefits, especially in a time of decreased in-person communication. Online interaction is beneficial in maintaining relationships with offline friends and family and can be a source of social capital.

Social capital is defined as “through social connections, individuals are able to acquire or utilize resources to which they would otherwise have no access” (Schmalz, Colistra, & Glover, 2019). Social capital is a significant benefit of having strong offline communities (Phua et al., 2017). Online communication has also been found to generate new relationships that might not otherwise develop, and online communication allows pre-existing relationships to deepen (Lee & Bonk, 2016). Overall, multiple studies show that online communities are a prominent contributor to social-wellbeing, which can increase a community member’s overall quality of life and mental health (Han et al., 2019).

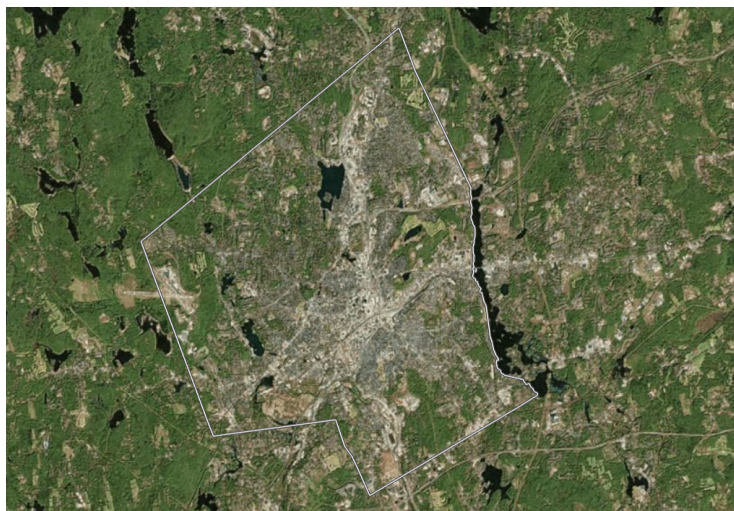


Figure 1. Map of Worcester, MA
From Bing Maps (2020)

Approach

This project aimed to support and aid our project sponsor, the Albanian Cultural Heritage Center, in envisioning a community space for the Albanian American community in Worcester. To achieve this goal, we identified the following objectives and methods to complete each objective:

1. Explore opinions of Worcester Albanian American community members on the merits of a digital community center
 - a. Conduct key informant interviews with active members of the community
2. Investigate potential programs and resources an online community center might provide, and develop and test run a pilot program
 - a. Conduct key informant interviews with active members of the community
 - b. Develop and execute a pilot program
 - c. Promote the idea of a community center and the pilot program via social media and individual conversations

3. Develop an understanding of community center structures and functions to inform the development of a digital center for the Albanian American community in Worcester
 - a. Research structure and function of physical community centers and online communities
 - b. Conduct key informant interviews with active members of the community
 - c. Complete the Social Blueprint Business Design Framework for a digital community center

Findings

By analyzing our key informant interviews, researching the literature of online community benefits and structure, and exploring the opinions and resources of Worcester's Albanian community, we were able to complete the Social Blueprint Business Design Framework developed by Impact Strategy Advisors. We also analyzed the successes, challenges, and outcomes of the Ask Your Grandparents program. The Framework serves to outline the most important values and aspects of creating a social business.

1. Anchor purpose and value proposition
 - a. *Findings.* A concern expressed during interviews was the loss of Albanian culture and language across generations after immigrating to America. Sharing similar interests in an online community space increases social and knowledge capital.
 - b. *Connection to Framework.* The increase in social connections and networks offered by a digital community center could address the concerns about the need to support Albanian culture and traditions.
2. Key partners
 - a. *Findings.* Short term key partners can contribute to the startup of a business and assist in coordinating events. Community members and resources are integral key partners.
 - b. *Connection to Framework.* Identifying the potential partnerships involved in the development of a digital community center contributes to the purpose and value of its operation.
3. Key activities and key resources
 - a. *Findings.* Community needs, wants, and values could be used to develop activities to generate interaction and participation. Online resources and connections were considered essential to generating involvement in the center.
 - b. *Connection to Framework.* Activities that the community is interested in

- should be developed to support the value proposition. Resources are required to make these activities successful.
4. Stakeholders, stakeholder relationships, and channels
 - a. *Findings.* Worcester's Albanian American community is diverse and exists in many different subcommunities. These communities can be reached through social media and online interactions.
 - b. *Connection to Framework.* The Albanian American community has different needs that might be met. Online communication with a range of members of the Albanian community in Worcester would be manageable online.
 5. Costs and revenue streams
 - a. *Findings.* Running a digital community center involves a wide array of costs, particularly those related to its administration. However, there are multiple avenues to balance the expected costs of the center.
 6. Differentiation and magnitude
 - a. *Findings.* A digital community center could serve as a resource database to assist the community and would be affordable.
 - b. *Connection to Framework.* Compared to a physical community center, a digital community center would be a lower cost.

7. *Ask Your Grandparents* program
 - a. *Findings.* The program faced many unexpected challenges, which should be taken into account when designing any community center program. However, the one submission reflected the literature on the importance of intergenerational storytelling in immigrant communities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on findings from our key informant interviews with the community, our investigation and analysis of community assets, and research into online community structure and operation, we developed a series of conclusions and recommendations for our sponsors at the Albanian Cultural Heritage Center.

1. The development of the executive and administrative structure is a critical first step in the design of the digital community center. We recommend developing a detailed administrative structure. A small team dedicating time to finalizing decisions concerning structure and function will be necessary for an initial start. Then a fully dedicated team will be required in the future.
2. The Albanian American community in Worcester values exploring their culture and history while sharing their traditions with others. The community could benefit from having a communal space to host interactions. We suggest channeling the community's interest by developing an online communication

platform to generate conversations and potential involvement in the community center.

3. The proposal of a digital community center for the Albanian American community in Worcester stimulated considerable community interest. We suggest creating an asset map to investigate the Albanian community strengths and assets in the greater Worcester area.
4. Initiating a community program or organization is challenging and requires time and careful consideration. Therefore, we recommend starting with familiar, easy-to-run activities and promoting a consistent value proposition of an online community center.
5. Consider adapting pan-Albanian programs such as pen pals, live streamed video games, and language classes that connect participants to their homeland.

These recommendations are intended to support the development of a digital community center. Our findings are explained in our deliverables, which include a step-by-step guide on beginning a community center, a guide on the tasks that should be completed to create a successful community program, a Social Blueprint Business Design Framework with detailed explanations, and a preliminary asset map of sites and businesses related to the Albanian American community in Worcester.

Authorship

For the Introduction and Community Context chapters, Luca and Matt focused on Albanian immigration and Worcester community resources, respectively. Jillian studied the benefits of community centers, and Savannah looked into intergenerational storytelling.

For the Approach chapter, Jillian focused on key informant interview analysis and the Ask Your Grandparents program adaptation, while Luca worked on describing the online community research elements, assisted by Matt.

For the Findings chapter, Savannah analyzed the results of the Ask Your Grandparents program and the Stakeholder and Key Resources sections of the Social Blueprint Business Design Framework. Matt analyzed the findings relating to Key Partners; Jillian focused on the Anchor Purpose, Value Proposition, Differentiation and Magnitude sections; Luca researched the Cost and Revenue Streams.

Jillian drafted the Conclusions and Recommendations chapter, which was revised by Luca. The Community Center Step-by-Step Guide and How to Make a Program Guide were completed by Luca and Matt. The Social Blueprint Business Design Framework was completed by Savannah.

The entire report was edited and revised collaboratively by the group members.

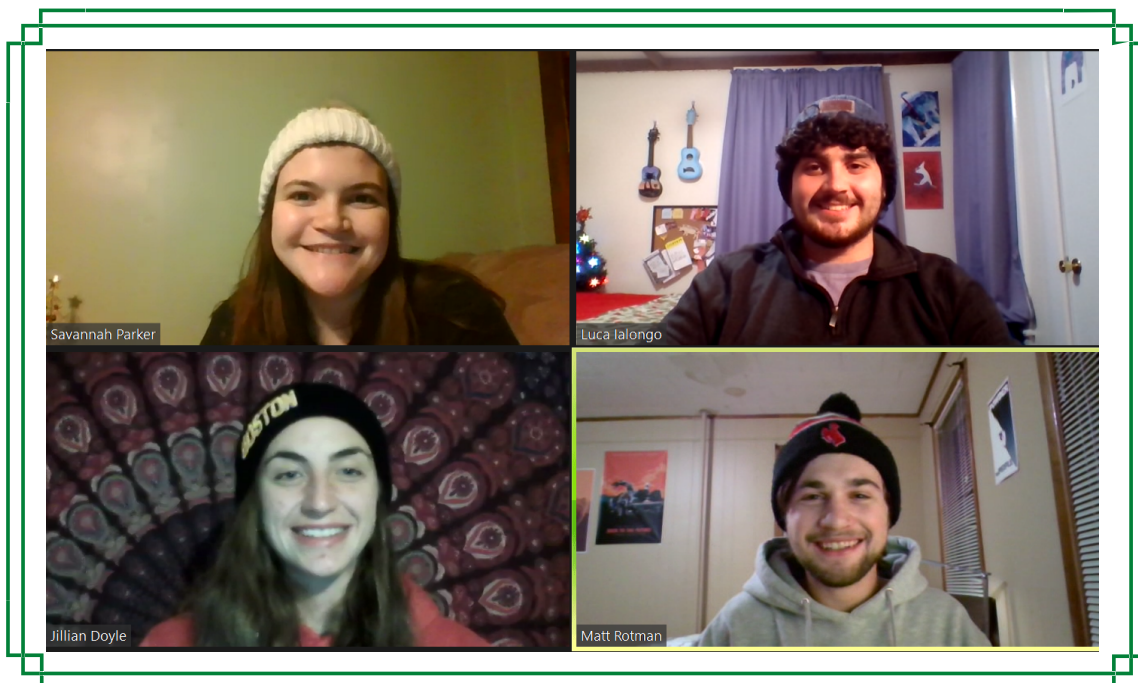


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Introduction



The widespread availability and use of online communication platforms have transformed the idea of community. Furthermore, the definition of community has changed over the years from people living in the same place to a network of interpersonal relationships due to the introduction of new means of communication, such as the internet (Wellman et al., 2002). Online interaction is particularly effective in maintaining

relationships with offline friends and family (Phua et al., 2017). Offline relationships, from family through school and work to social relations, may also be present online in a manner that is rarely distinguished from one's offline life (Burns & Gottschalk, 2019). Some relationships created online eventually migrate to face-to-face settings. Additionally, online interaction can also be a significant source of social capital. Social capital is defined as "through social

Introduction

connections, individuals are able to acquire or utilize resources to which they would otherwise have no access” (Schmalz, Colistra, & Glover, 2019). Social capital is a significant benefit of strong offline communities (Phua et al., 2017). Online communication has also been found to generate new relationships that might not otherwise develop, and online communication allows pre existing relationships to deepen (Lee & Bonk, 2016). Multiple studies show that online communities are a prominent contributor of social-wellbeing, which can increase a community member’s overall quality of life and mental health (Han et al., 2019).

Worcester’s Albanian American population contributes to both the population size and civic involvement in the city. There are currently more than 20,000 Albanian Americans residing in Worcester, representing one of the largest immigrant communities in the city. The Worcester Albanian community is multigenerational and composed of pre- and post-communist immigrants with very different memories and experiences of Albania. Community centers are designed with the goal of bringing people together over a shared interest or history. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, communities are discovering new ways to virtually connect with others. There is now an opportunity to give greater consideration to an online presence to help maintain and create social connections. With numerous waves of Albanian immigration to the United

States, it is sometimes challenging to welcome and socially integrate with newer members of society. As with most immigrant cultures, heterogeneity in the Albanian population in Worcester is perhaps the greatest challenge in community-building. Individual reasons for migration, especially between education and occupation, impacts the ability to integrate into a new society (OECD, 2019). A digital community space presents the opportunity to involve a broader, more diverse audience and to envision virtual community programs that reflect social and cultural benefits.

The Albanian Cultural Heritage Center (ACHC), an organization in development by Tomi and Edlira Stefani, have sponsored this project with the aim to encourage community integration and interaction by designing a community space. We collaborated with our sponsors who are active members in the community with a passion for Albanian culture and history. Their goal is to preserve and share Albanian culture in the Worcester area. They work to improve the community by being on the board for the St. Mary’s Albanian Church and managing local social media pages. This project aimed to support and aid our project sponsor in envisioning a community space for the Albanian American community in Worcester through the development of a cultural program, the exploration of literature on online community spaces, and the investigation of current individual

resources and values. The team executed this project through a series of online key informant interviews with active Albanian community members in Worcester, Massachusetts and testing a pilot program

to assist our project sponsor in the design and implementation of an online community space. An online community center may catalyze community interest and involvement in new and unique ways



Photo by: Edlira Stefani



Photo by: Morgan Deangelis

Community Context



The Albanian Community in Worcester
Online Communities
Community Center Program Design

Community Context

The Albanian Community in Worcester

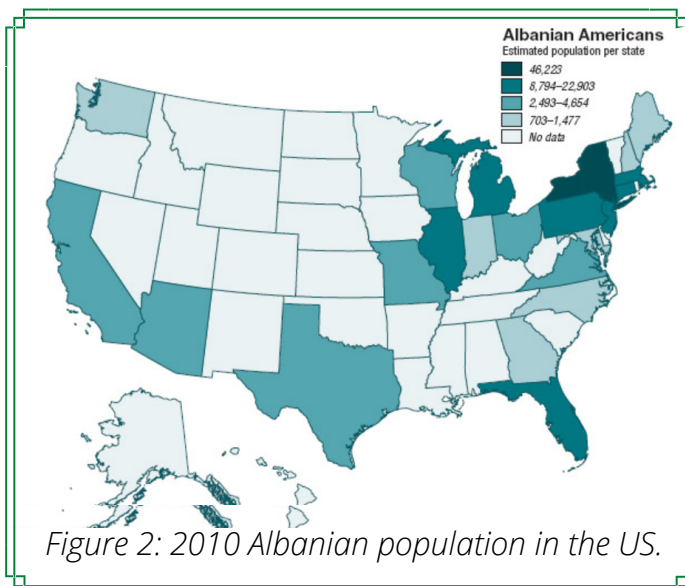
Albanian Immigration to the United States

Albanians settled in the United States arrived in four major waves since the late 1800's: a large initial wave between the early 1890s and 1920s; two smaller waves from the 1930s to 1950s and the 1960s to 1980s; and the current wave which began in 1991 (Fischer, 2005). These immigration patterns and eras of immigration can be linked to different aspects of Albanian history, which are crucial to understanding the lives and culture of the Albanian Americans today.

This first wave of Albanian immigrants arrived in America due to a variety of economic, political, and religious situations in Albania. The first half of this initial wave was mainly Orthodox Christians, while the tail end had a higher concentration of Muslims (Jurgens, 2014). Initially, most Albanians who immigrated were from the Korçë region of Albania. They settled heavily in the northeastern region of the country like Massachusetts, New York, and Michigan as there were ample job opportunities due to the industrialization at the time (Fischer, 2005).

The second and third waves of Albanian Americans between the 1930's and 1980's occurred under the communist regime and consisted of refugees when extreme isolationist policies made it difficult, and sometimes fatal, to leave the country

(Ragaru and Dymi 2004). Between the 1930s and 1975, only 2438 Albanians officially immigrated to the United States (Fischer, 2005; Lumaj, 2017). The fourth, and largest, wave of immigration began in 1991 with the fall of the communist regime in Albania initiated by the death of Enver Hoxha in 1985. Borders reopened in 1991 and it was less dangerous to leave the country, which encouraged those in search of escape or looking for a new life to emigrate (Lumaj, 2017). Between 1991



and 1997, Albania struggled to repair, restructure, and reform itself, but the citizens and government faced a crushing economic blow when it was revealed that the economic recovery programs which two thirds of the country had been investing in were unsustainable as they were large ponzi schemes. These conflicts, in addition to the wish to reconnect with family outside of the country, led to a massive westward migration of Albanians in search of better lives (Jurgens, 2014).

By the end of the first wave (1920's), there were an estimated 60,000 Albanians in the United States. However, between 1991 and 1998, the number of Albanians in the United States jumped to an estimated 400,000 people (Jurgens, 2014). Based on the 2015 census, approximately one-third of the 1991 Albanian population lives outside of Albania (Nedelkoska and Khaw, 2015). Industrialization opportunities in the United States combined with the goal of reconnecting with family encouraged newer waves of Albanian immigrants to settle near those they knew would support them (Jurgens, 2014; Skenderi & Kelmendi, 2002).

Albanian American Immigration to Worcester, Massachusetts

The Albanian American community in Worcester, Massachusetts is composed of approximately 20,000 Albanian Americans, or approximately 11% of the entire Worcester population (Jurgens, 2014). In Massachusetts, older generations began to see a massive increase in intergenerational social mobility in comparison to other Albanian communities around the country (Ragaru and Dymi, 2004). Intergenerational social mobility is the relationship between past and future generations in regards to their social and economic status, or their individual standing in relation to others in society. An increase in this relationship meant the children of Albanian Americans would be moving up in social status in the United States (Khaw and Nedelkoska, 2015). The arrival of the post-communism waves of Albanian immigrants highlighted differences among each generation's

education level, representation in employment hierarchy, job preferences, and perspectives of the Albanian culture, due to communism's effect. This generated differences between the "old guard" Albanians who had been in the United States and new arrivals. (Khaw and Nedelkoska, 2015). Differing life experiences led to differing political and cultural expectations (Ragaru and Dymi, 2004). The Massachusetts Albanian community was well enough developed that new Albanians were able to settle and begin adapting to their new lives.

Worcester-Based Assets

The City of Worcester provides several programs, initiatives, and support for its variety of immigrant communities. The Albanian community in Worcester in particular has a range of assets available to them that support the community now and that may be beneficial in the development of an online community center. The St. Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church, Friendly House, and Massachusetts Albanian American Society BESA (MAASBESA) directly contribute to, and involve, Albanians in Worcester. Built in 1911, St. Mary's is one of the oldest Albanian churches founded in the United States (Jurgens J., 2014). It hosts the largest biennial gathering of Albanians in America for the celebration of their culture. Thousands of Albanians celebrate their culture at this three-day-long festival held at the church in Worcester. Many claim it is one of the most important Albanian community events in the United States

and serves as a way to preserve Albanian culture (Worcester Magazine, 2013). Friendly House is an online and physical assistance program that serves members of the Albanian community and others in need. They offer housing assistance, necessity programs such as food, clothing, and toy collection and distribution, and many childcare programs such as after-school activities involving sports, tutoring, games, and art & crafts (Friendly House). MAASBESA provides support and assistance for Albanians in Massachusetts. Additionally, MAASBESA also contributes financial support, resources to businesses and services, advertisements for Albanian businesses, and occasional events in the greater Boston area such as the Albanian Independence Day celebration to the community (MAASBESA).

Additionally, other sources of support are available to the population in the Worcester and greater Massachusetts area. The website *Coming Home Worcester* is an online page that provides an easily navigable website to different forms of support, one of which is for immigrants. Different medical, social, and educational service providers are listed and advertised to those in need of them. The Jewish Community Center (JCC) located in Worcester and the Ghanaian Association of Greater Boston (GAGB) located in Waltham, Massachusetts both provide cultural classes and events. Some of the JCC's largest programs are their summer care programs for children

in which they provide extensive outdoor events such as aquatic lessons, sports, and daycare facilities. The GAGB provides extensive support for cultural ceremonies such as birth and marriage ceremonies. They also provide other forms of assistance such as financial aid, health support, and integration support to members new to the United States.

Benefits of Virtual Community Centers

Community centers play an important role as a space to bring people together in a common setting, despite differences in individual backgrounds. They are often developed to increase community participation and improve social networks. Researchers have identified four types of social benefits; the development of social identity, psychological well-being, relationship growth, and the increase of social capital within the establishment of a sustainable and coordinated society (Medved, 2017). These outcomes still apply in improving the social status of a community, regardless of whether or not members interact face to face.

Psychological Well-being

An important aspect of the community center that has long-lasting benefits is the positive impact on mental health that a communal place can provide. There are several studies highlighting the connection between the utilization of an online social platform and the improvement of psychological well-being. For example, in a report on interviews with 17 online forum participants, research showed that community forums helped to address geographical isolation, improve social



Photo by: Edlira Stefani

connections on a daily basis, and provide information and practical advice (Smith-Merry et. al., 2019). This results in lowered levels of anxiety and depression due to loneliness as well as the satisfactory feeling that community members have contributed to society (Cohlman, 2015).

According to Kahin and Keller, the human mind requires affiliation nearly as much as it requires information for growth (1995). Therefore, creating social connections with others who affiliate with similar topics of interest are important for mental development. Furthermore, online community participants are more likely to be attracted towards online forums that share common interests and concerns (Cinar, 2016). Even though participants are not interacting in face-to-face activities, the opportunity to build relationships with other individuals of similar interests remains possible. Similarly, the establishment of relationships provides emotional and mental support. For example, if a participant were facing a

struggle related to a physical disorder or mental disability, online communities offer a safe space for digital interactions between those who face similar challenges and struggles every day (Gilbert, 2018). The benefits of online communities towards mental well-being also include a boost in self-esteem that stems from actively interacting in digital social networks. Online community members are also more likely to take pride in being a participant and demonstrate positive judgment of the online space (England, 2015). In one psychology study, 300 online community members of various ages and occupations reported a positive correlation between digital social network use and psychological ownership. Psychological ownership, or in this case the theory that online users believed they belonged to their online community, demonstrates that users are deeply mentally associated with their communities, which also contributes to greater self-esteem (Lee, 2015).

Increase in Social Capital

Social capital refers to the connections, shared values, and understandings that encourage teamwork and trust (Bixler, Colistra, & Schmalz, 2019). In a community center, group participation in activities improves the interpersonal understanding generating closer social ties and boosting individuals' positive perception of themselves. The purpose of an online community is to host a series of social networks that provide members with resources for education, collective programs, and societal development (Scott & Johnson, 2005). For example, immigrant community spaces such as the Albanian American Cultural Center in New Jersey aim to preserve Albanian heritage through their public programs and social networks. In this sense, providing an active public resource for the Albanian community both improves social interactions among members and offers an opportunity to learn about the Albanian community.

There is a common misperception that a population's diversity can hinder the development of social capital. However, reports from a community center in London explained that a diverse culture enhanced their experience in social networks and differences in heritage ultimately contributed to stronger social ties, as it led people to open up more about their life stories and understanding (Mintchev & Moore, 2016). This applies to an online community space as well, particularly through storytelling activities that are designed to capture cultural heritage.

There has been research done into the effect of physical community centers and their increase in social capital, often coming from active engagement and meaningful interaction (Bixler, Colistra, & Schmalz, 2019). Social capital from online interaction comes in the form of relationship maintenance with offline friends and family, interaction with people from a different geographical area, and other primary forms of interaction. The interaction online can result in both superficial and deep relationships, though both lend themselves to expanded social capital (Phua et. al., 2017). Two primary types of social capital are bridging and bonding capital. Bridging capital refers to the bonding between people with different backgrounds, while bonding capital refers to the bonding of people with similar backgrounds. Both are present in online spaces, varying in both platform for communication and reason for communication (Phua et. al., 2017; Norris, 2002).

Online Communities for the Albanian Community in Worcester

Social online communities provide numerous opportunities to anyone with internet access ranging from creating and discussing content to playing virtual games. These social interactions are performed together and influenced by others (Arrasvuori, 2009). To build on existing social interactions and foster a stronger sense of community, an online

community center for the Albanian community in the greater Worcester area might offer the ability to talk about different social issues and topics among varying members of the community. Additionally, an online community center might encourage further connections with individuals that develop into relationships outside of the Albanian community. These services allow people to establish and maintain personal relationships within the context of shared values and beliefs, or while pursuing a common goal (Arrasvuori, 2009).

Online Content: Creating and Sustaining Online Communities

There are two main ways to participate in an online community; interacting with content, and interacting with other users. Content is generally supplied by community organizers. Content participation can be accomplished by accessing or creating content, educating the viewer, maintaining content and sharing within the community, or to other communities. digital content includes text, images, audio, video, and objects used in virtual worlds. Content can also be interactive, like games or a public question or poll (Arrasvuori, 2009). This content consists of four categories – get (access & create), enjoy (and enrich), maintain, and share (Aaltonen, 2007). Participation through community members can be seen through socializing (synchronously, such as in events, or asynchronously), observing, governing (community organizers), play, recruit, and external activities (outside the confines of the online space). While it is not

necessary to check all of these participatory boxes when creating a community space online, the more options offered, the more likely an online community is to gain and maintain members (Burns, 2012).

Virtual Ethnicity in Immigrant Online Communities

The concept of virtual ethnicity in online communities describes the expression or exploration of one's identity through a cybercommunity space such as the internet that articulates global interactions (Poster, 1998). In one report, Diamantaki describes virtual ethnicity as a social construct that is developed and evolved by the local community that takes place on a global platform, the internet. Online communities offer an opportunity for virtual ethnicity to possibly overcome society's assumptions and create dual identities. Community members may experience empowerment and have access to resources they would not have had otherwise (Ginossar & Nelson, 2010).

The cultivation of an ethnic community in an online forum encourages the exploration of the culture and heritage. Virtual ethnicity can be preserved and reflected through the participation in online communities so that their identities may not be lost when assimilating to a new culture (Weiss, Nincic, & Nolan, 2005).

Intergenerational Interactions

Two of the primary goals of our sponsor were to strengthen the ties between the older and younger generations of Albanians in Worcester and to pass on Albanian history and culture to the younger generations. Today, there is less intergenerational interaction due to changes in family structures (Park, 2015). However, intergenerational interaction allows for learning that is typically not learned in the classroom. In their 2008 study, Newman and Hatton-Yeo explain that in families, intergenerational interaction is most commonly used to not only provide love and care to the younger generations, but also ground the newer generations in the culture and history of the family. For the older generations, intergenerational interaction provides love and support as well as contemporary insights on current culture (Newman & Hatton-Yeo, 2008). Storytelling has a

positive impact on community involvement, family connections, cultural awareness, and self identity (Flottemesch, 2013). When storytelling is encouraged between generations, it aids the younger generations to understand their family and cultural history, as well as provide many benefits to both the older and younger generations.

Sharing of Culture and History

Storytelling in families is often a way to pass on different elements of culture and history. In Huisman's 2014 study, families often told stories concerning cultural history and how various aspects of that history directly tied into their family identity (Huisman, 2014). This resulted in the younger generations having a stronger tie to their cultural identity. This is most common in families where they are in contact with the extended family (Bylund, 2003). One report done by Yoshida et. al. at The Intergenerational Center at Temple University examined immigrant



Photo by: Edlira Stefani

communities and showed that most members of the community say storytelling is one of the most important aspects of preserving their culture, and not sharing those stories will result in a great loss. This study examined different immigrant communities, the generational disconnect that upset members of the community, and developed intergenerational programs that aimed to solve them. For example, the Cambodia Association of Greater Philadelphia (CAGP) drew on participants from its youth and senior programs to develop a photo and story sharing session that had lasting effects on youth, seniors, and the CAGP. By examining this program and other similar programs, Yoshida was able to conclude the importance of preserving culture in intergenerational storytelling programs (Yoshida et al., 2013).

Improving Relationships

Intergenerational storytelling is a useful tool to not only teach younger people about their history, but also to improve relations between generations. When younger people learn about their family's past, even when it is difficult, it is shown to have a positive effect on the family, especially when the younger people are also going through a difficult time (Kellas & Trees, 2006). It allows for the listener to understand the family's belief system and values, as well as enables the teller to make sense of their own stories with family support. In one study on intergenerational storytelling, all participants felt closer to the other person in the storytelling exercise (Flottemesch, 2013). Younger people reported feeling

closer to their elders, feeling more respect for them, and developing a strong relationship where one did not previously exist. These stories also transmitted family values and younger people understood more about their family's structure and beliefs. One report examining immigrant communities showed that both older and younger generations felt isolated within their families, and intergenerational activities helped them overcome and talk through that feeling of isolation, resulting in stronger bonds (Yoshida et al., 2013). Overall, intergenerational storytelling provides an opportunity for different generations to connect, as well as a transmission of family values and culture.

Other Benefits of Intergenerational Interaction

Intergenerational interaction provides numerous benefits for both older and younger generations. For young people, specifically children, many had a more positive view of older people than before they started; they also learned how to show admiration and respect towards older people better than before (Park, 2015). Children showed lower levels of anxiety and an increase in self worth in long-term programs. They also learn better social skills and get better at solving personal problems (Newman & Hatton-Yeo, 2008). For older people, they often learn from the younger people just as much, had an increased self esteem, and reported better familial relationships (Newman & Hatton-Yeo, 2008). In one report examining four case studies, both groups reported feeling greater empathy

for one another; young people reported they now understand the sacrifices the older generations had made, while the older people reported they now understand that young people possess knowledge that they do not (Yoshida et al., 2013). There are numerous mutual benefits for the people involved in intergenerational programs, often leading to long-term positive outcomes.

Intergenerational Storytelling Programs in Albania

The team designed an *Ask Your Grandparents* program based on an annual digital story competition the Institute for Democracy, Media, & Culture (IDMC)

launched in Albania in 2016 titled *Ask Your Grandparents*. The competition was designed to connect Albanian youth to important parts of cultural history by talking through a different generation's experience creatively, as well as raising awareness on the importance of history. The program accepts videos, audio files, essays, and visual arts. The program was originally designed for young people over the age of 15, but more recent competitions have been for young people aged 15-19. Winners are chosen based on criteria such as authenticity, understandability, creativity, and having a powerful message (IDMC, 2020).



Photo by: Edlira Stefani



Photo by: Morgan Deangelis

3.0 Approach



Key Informant Interviews

Objective 1: Exploring the Potential of a Digital Community

Objective 2: Ask Your Grandparents program

Objective 3: Community center structure and function

Approach

This project aims to support and aid our project sponsor, the Albanian Cultural Heritage Center, in envisioning a community space for the Albanian American community in Worcester. To achieve this goal, we have identified the following objectives:

1. Explore opinions of Worcester Albanian American community members on the merits of a digital community center
2. Investigate potential programs and resources an online community center might provide and develop and test run a pilot program
3. Develop an understanding of community center structures and functions to inform the development of a digital center for the Albanian American community in Worcester

To accomplish these objectives, the team collected data from online community resources and key informant interviews.

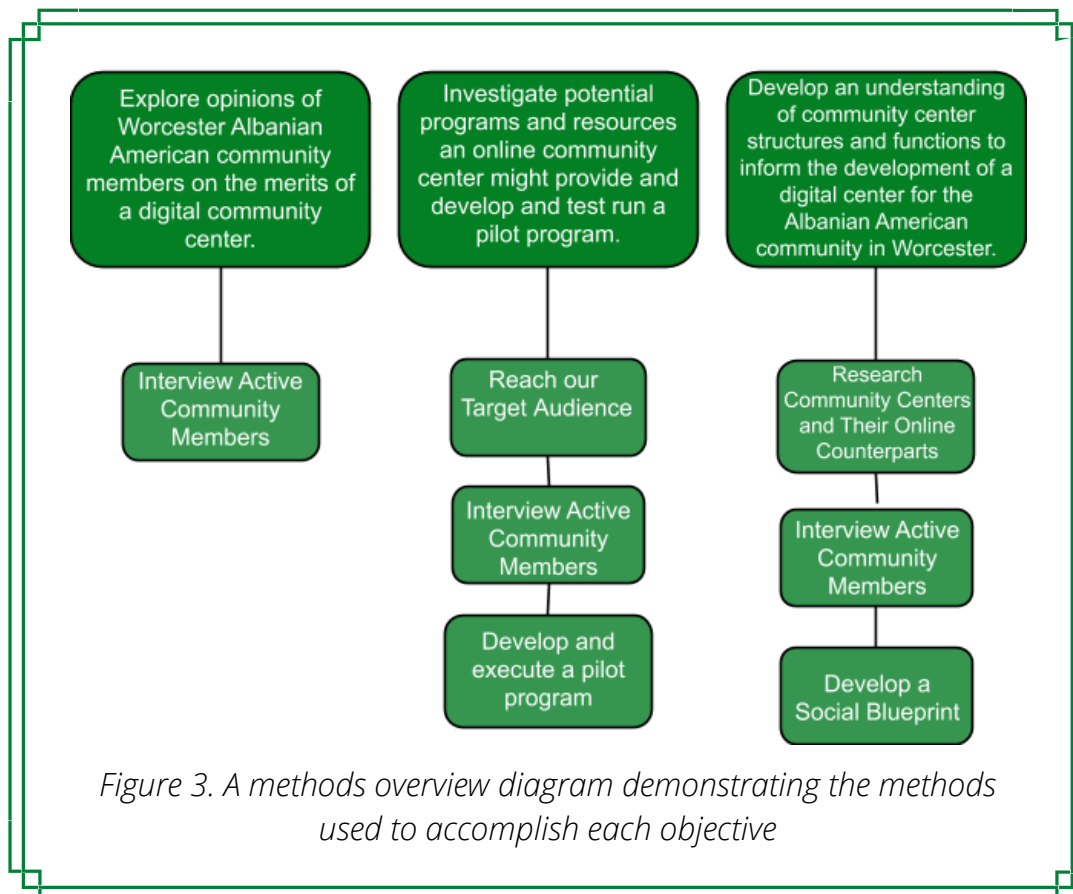


Figure 3. A methods overview diagram demonstrating the methods used to accomplish each objective

Key Informant Interviews

There are several active members of the Albanian community in Worcester whose experiences in community involvement helped us understand the community. Inviting the interviewees to share an in-depth conversation about their lives offered insight into their perspective of the Albanian population.

Holding key informant interviews with involved members of the community presented a greater understanding of community participation in society. The interviews were ideal for feedback because they were best used for exploring “the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman, 1991). Consent scripts for quoting and photo requests are in Appendices A and B, respectively. Questions asked during the key informant interviews are in Appendix C. After introducing the idea of a digital community center, the team gathered the informant’s initial responses and opinions on what factors they recommend. The creation of an online community center is unique to its proposed members, and understanding how to connect the community in new ways could be essential to its development. Additionally, the interviews allowed the team to introduce the idea of developing a digital community center and to gather initial feedback or suggestions. The team analyzed community interest in the project or specific community programs

Objective 1: Exploring the Potential of a Digital Community

We interviewed key informants in the community referred to us by our sponsor, Edlira Stefani, to gather advice and understand opinions on the potential development of a digital community center. Through our conversations, we explored how to integrate community values and assets into an online community center and ways to capture the expectations of community members to incorporate their aspirations into the design. We asked simple, open-ended questions to the interviewees to encourage a variety of viewpoints such as the questions below:

Do you think a digital community center based in Worcester is a good idea for the Albanian American community? Why or why not?

What would you say are the defining assets of the community? How can these assets contribute to community involvement?

What purpose do you think a digital community center could serve the community?

The key informants illuminated to us if they predicted success in the future or if there were still obstacles that needed to be addressed. We sought to understand how some community members felt about the idea of a digital center.

Objective 2: Adapting and Testing the Ask Your Grandparents Program

This program allows for sharing Albanian culture and history as well as strengthening intergenerational relationships between community members, which were two main goals of our sponsor. Questions we asked key informants relating to the program are outlined below.

What initial feedback do you have after hearing about the Ask Your Grandparents program?

If you were to participate, what do you think would be the greatest benefit or enjoyment?

Through these questions, we worked to generate discussion and gain a better understanding of where the community stands with its feelings towards the trial program in a community center.

Ask Your Grandparents: Development and Execution

Test-running the program determined whether the single trial program could initiate community participation in intergenerational storytelling. For guidance, we adapted our program to the original *Ask Your Grandparents* program created by the Institute for Democracy Media and Culture, which was a contest targeted at Albanian participants age 19 and under to reflect on an interview or

conversation they had with their grandparents about their past. The purpose of the contest was to raise awareness about the history and living experiences under the communist regime in Albania. To integrate the original program design to best fit the goal of the potential digital community center, we eliminated the contest incentive and instead introduced the idea of a digital exhibition for the community to enjoy. Additionally, we expanded on ways to participate (see Appendix D) by offering several open-ended prompts and accepting multiple forms of submission such as drawings and poems accompanied by a paragraph explaining their submission. Full details of participation and the submission form were available on a website specifically created for this purpose (see Appendix E)

We ran a trial run of the program for 26 days to try to initiate community participation. There are several things to consider when designing the program, such as how to motivate the community to participate, rules and eligibility, and developing a concrete explanation of what the program aims to accomplish. With reference to Appendix F, the team developed a concrete proposal for the program that identifies the terms and conditions for the program, the background of the decision to develop the *Ask Your Grandparents* program, and a description of how we analyzed the results.

Through the process of creating the detailed proposal, the team hoped to eliminate potential challenges. Other benefits of writing down a thorough proposal for the program include building a consensus to ensure mutual understanding of program expectations (Alonzi, 2020).

Ask Your Grandparents: Sampling Strategy

The program was slated for a participant pool of those under 21 years old working with their grandparents, but was ultimately open to participants of all ages to work with their seniors. Our target audience consisted of those in the Albanian community with connections to those who would be willing to participate in our program. Our initial outreach was communicated through the Facebook pages listed below and through emailing close contacts of our sponsors who were able to support the program's spreading awareness. The sampling strategy primarily involved random convenience sampling. We aimed to incorporate the opinions and input of community members in a broad demographic range. We held interviews and promoted the program to those recommended by our sponsors and those recommended by previous interviewees.

Ask Your Grandparents: Marketing the Program

The Albanian Community of Worcester Facebook page alone has nearly 3,000 followers, all of which we hoped would test-run our trial program.



Photo by: Edlira Stefani

Other online locations with large user bases included a Facebook page called Team Albanians run by Deni Hoxha which has a little over 59,000 followers, the Facebook page of the St. Mary's Church with over 1,500 followers, the MAASBESA Facebook page with almost 5,400 followers, and Gocat e Boston Facebook Page, known as The Girls of Boston, with around 2,300 followers.

These Facebook groups reached our target audience members of these communities to provide a connection to other Albanians. Establishing cross network connections and encouraging people to spread the word in any manner possible were vital in spreading awareness and gathering participants for our program. As noted in the case study from Sircar and Rowley, Facebook tended to be the best platform to reach the community as it was easy to interact with and could easily be set as a central online location while utilizing other social media platforms, and encouraging the community to spread the word on those

had a larger reach than direct postings would (Sircar and Rowley, 2016).

Ask Your Grandparents: Produce Facebook Posts to Promote the Program

Our community outreach consisted of individual outreach through our key informant interviews, but mainly involved social media to contact larger audiences efficiently. Facebook posts shared to the aforementioned community pages elicited online user interactions and views that assisted us in understanding the popularity of the posts.

The first step of our promotional plan consisted of a simple yet personable introduction video followed by reminder posts as referenced in Appendix D. Our sponsors and the Digital Marketing Institute website noted that an introductory video is advantageous to advertisement perception, and is especially important for the Albanian community as they appreciate more personal and meaningful outreach. Giving your promotion this personal touch makes it seem friendlier and less intimidating (DMI, 2020).

To supplement the video, we created a poster (see Appendix G) to visually engage the community and provide a concise explanation of the description and purpose of the program, rules for participation, and submission guidelines. We referenced our website (see Appendix E) at the closing of the post for further information and clarification on the program. The poster was written in both English and Albanian to appeal and reach out to more participants and bridge the

language gap in communicating with the community.

We continued to post regularly once or twice a week (see Appendix D) to both remind the community of the program as well as engage new community members who may have missed the previous posts. The primary purpose of these two posts were to clarify the purpose and description of the *Ask Your Grandparents* program and give examples on multimedia submission formats so the community could better understand why and how to participate. We also conducted a content analysis of public reactions and interactions made on Facebook to gauge community interest and preferences. Community reactions to the advertisement posts could inform the team about whether the public supports the program or if the community program may be more difficult than anticipated to organize and test run.

Objective 3: Develop an Understanding of Community Center Structures and Functions

We investigated to build an understanding of how different online communities and offline physical community centers function, their structure, and what they can offer their members. Once our team developed this larger picture, we began structuring a Social Blueprint Business Design Framework for the community center. We developed a business and administrative structure to guide our sponsors in how

they can best lead their center and provide for the needs of the community. The developed step by step guide is referenced in Appendix I.

***Community Center Research:
Developing the Social Blueprint***

The Social Blueprint Business Design Framework is a tool used to inform the development of social enterprises. We used the blank template to identify and think through the purpose, function, and critical processes of an online community center (Appendix J). We used data gathered from the research, information from our sponsors, and from interviewee responses. The key component of this framework was the Value Proposition, which relates to the potential value the

community center could offer to the community.

It is crucial to note that a community is a “living” thing and the blueprint may need to be adjusted and adapted to meet changing community needs. Therefore, we offered more than one solution for some aspects of the blueprint.

***Community Center Research:
Developing an Administrative Structure***

Through the development of the Framework, the next step would be to provide information on aspects such as managerial structure, costs and revenue building, direct applicable resources and activities that can be provided through an online center.



Photo by: Morgan Deangelis

4.0 Findings



Key Informant Profiles
Anchor Purpose & Value Proposition
Key Partners
Key Activities & Key Resources
Stakeholders, Stakeholder Relationships & Channels
Costs & Revenue Streams
Differentiation & Magnitude
Ask Your Grandparents Program

Key Informant Profiles



Etel Haxhiaj

Etel is an active member of the local community who recently ran for city council and lost in 2019. Etel and her family left Albania in 1997 before settling down in Worcester in 2001. She currently works with the Central Mass Housing Alliance to help those in need.

Edlira Avdulla

Edlira is a Mortgage Loan Officer with Rockland Trust. She founded the *Gocat e Boston* Facebook page which she is an admin for. The page currently hosts 2500 members, supporting new immigrants and each other in the greater Boston area.



Orion Stavre

Orion is the Associate Director of Marketing Technology at WPI. Orion has been in the U.S. for the last 20 years. He has two young children aged 5 and 7.

Deni Hoxha

Deni is a student at Harvard university where he runs the Albanian Students Association. He also manages the *Team Albanians* social media pages with more than 59,000 followers. Deni has been involved in the community for quite some time, coordinating the *Shok* community event in 2016.



Polikseni Manxhari

Polikseni has been very active in the Albanian community here in Worcester. She has been in the Worcester area for 25 years and has been a Valle dancer in many festivals. She won Miss Massachusetts in 2015 and is currently the traffic reporter at Channel 7 News in Boston.

Valerie Kerxhalli

Valerie is the former President of the St. Mary's Albanian Church Council. Valerie has lived in the U.S. her entire life. She has been instrumental in church and festival operations for many years.



Our key informant interviews, research on online communities, and the beta test of the *Ask Your Grandparents* program on social media aided in the development of a Social Blueprint Business Design Framework. The framework was created by Impact Strategy Advisors to identify the scope and objectives of an online community center as well as the social benefits and values it might provide.

This framework consisted of twelve major points of focus, each focus has associated questions and concerns. Through the key informant interviews, we utilized a thematic analysis to draw recurring or surprising ideas that we found useful to developing the Framework. We have provided findings relating to each section of the Social Blueprint Business Design Framework.

The Social Blueprint Business Design Workbook -Blanks	Project Name	Community Center	Participants	Albanian Cultural Heritage Center Team	
	Version	1	Date	11/26/2020	
	Key Instruction • The Blank template is optimal for handwritten activities				
Anchor Purpose To provide the Albanian community in the greater Worcester area an inclusive place to interact and congregate over major community values and assets To promote community programs from a digital community center platform that encourages cultural learning and bridges the generations					
Key Partners Administration: Tomi and Eda Stefani Businesses owned by albanians: MAASBESA St. Mary's Church (youth group, men's group, women's group) Facebook groups/pages (Albanian Community of Worcester, Team Albanians, Gocat e Boston) Worcester Cultural Coalition Worcester Historical Society Worcester Art Association WPI Albanian Project Center Individual talents Graphic designers Website designers Support services	Key Activities Virtual public meetings via Zoom to hold conversations Ask Your Grandparents virtual submissions and digital showcase Virtual cooking class Virtual art or museum exhibition Virtual Language, history, or cultural lessons Resources to adapt to American Society Key Resources Public website to host activities calendar and program interactions Social media (Facebook) to reach out to the community Social capital/networks/resources for individual relations	Value Propositions Offering an online community platform for inter customer communication and virtually adapted activities and resources Serving as a social gathering place where members can exchange ideas and help each other Aiming to preserve and educate those who are interested in the Albanian culture and tradition Offering guidance towards finding society resources for Albanian immigrant integration	Stakeholder Relationships Team's role is to provide the resources needed for the community to develop relationships and social capital/networks Customers express willingness to participate and become involved in community programs Channels Ask Your Grandparents Facebook Page used to promote different programs "Albanian community center" Facebook Page can be developed in future Posts are shared to other, more popular and established Facebook Pages Website used as organizational base platform	Stakeholders Digital Community Center is directed towards the Worcester Albanian American community, whose profiles range over all demographics (age, gender, occupation...) Albanian community issue is that there is a lack of a comprehensive online community space where members can have access to many different resources and activities. Digital community center aims to address issue through providing inclusive educational and cultural activities and resources	
Costs Consider cost of future programs (right now we are considering free or open programs) Consider cost of operating a website Time cost of dedication to activity organization		Revenue Streams The digital center is volunteer based Revenue would rely on volunteer contributions Possible funding organizations: MAASBESA, Worcester Cultural Coalition Mass Cultural Council Not considering membership payments at this time, although some individuals were interested in small donations			
Differentiation A digital community center eliminates the cost of owning and operating a building. Costs and revenue streams are placed at less of an importance. A digital center opens the opportunity to welcome a broader audience without travel expenses.		Magnitude Online center captures preliminary community interest and involvement to lay groundwork for future expansion (building, funding and administration development) Volunteer administration and online platform places economic concerns and impact at a minimum.			

2014, Developed by Jorge Calderon, Managing Director, jorge@impactstrategyadvisors.com

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Figure 4: The completed Social Blueprint Business Design Framework outlining our plan for a digital community center.

Anchor Purpose and Value Proposition

The anchor purpose and value proposition sections of the Social Blueprint Business Design Framework explain the overall goal of the community organization strategy. In our findings, the team aims to address the following questions that pertained to each section of the Social Blueprint Business Design Framework:

Why does this company or organization exist?

What do you want to achieve?

What value do you bring to the community members?

What type of service or product are you offering to the community members?

How do your sponsors and the community members benefit?

Our findings relating to these questions include:

The ability to share similar interests in an online community space increases social capital and knowledge capital.

All key informants identified the importance of a digital community center that is an inclusive platform where all members of the community can hold conversations via Zoom, livestream programs, or simply communicate on a community forum such as a blog.

An online discussion board can provide the opportunity to spark conversations and allow for the community to differentiate into groups that wish to discuss different themes, issues, or experiences. This relates closely to the increase in bonding social capital, which is a benefit that stems from participating in an online community. The linkage of these specialized groups refers to bridging social capital, and establishing an online space where people can explore different knowledge platforms (such as political, cultural, or familial forums) translates into the generation of interpersonal trust and reinforcing relationship ties (Norris, 2002).



Photo by: Edlira Stefani

Through our interviews, we found that participants express a lot of pride towards their home country and a willingness to share their culture with others. In the terms of social capital, this inclination of community members to teach or help others to understand aspects of their culture is a form of bridging social capital, in which the community is reaching out to other differentiated social groups. Storytelling of all forms was identified as the easiest and most popular way for the community to share these experiences, and this is the aspect we wish to capture in envisioning an online community center. Former Albanian festival traditional dance dancer Polikseni Manxhari described the impact on the community in sharing their own experiences with others as a way to look back on their own history:

A concern that was addressed during the key informant interviews was the loss of culture and language after immigrating to America.

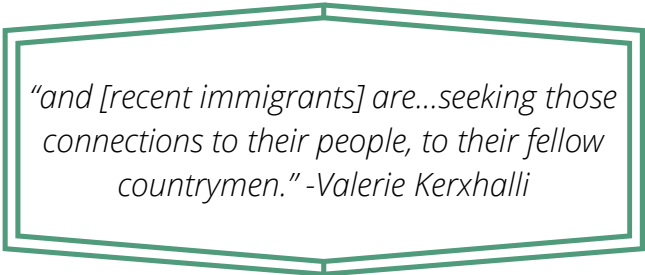
Nearly all participants expressed the importance and need to encourage the younger generation to learn about the history and heritage of Albania from their families, especially their grandparents. Intergenerational storytelling between grandparents and their grandchildren allows for the listener to understand the family's belief system and values, as well as

Nearly all participants expressed the importance and need to encourage the younger generation to learn about the history and heritage of Albania from their families, especially their grandparents.

*"It's important to get people together and have them reflecting on those memories of their home country."
- Polikseni Manxhari*

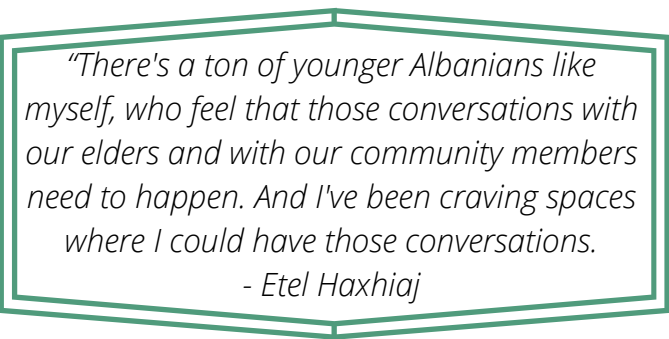
Intergenerational storytelling between grandparents and their grandchildren allows for the listener to understand the family's belief system and values, as well as enables the teller to make sense of their own stories with family support (Kellas & Trees, 2006). Polikseni Manxhari remarked that the second or third generation Albanian Americans are more "Americanized" and "modernized" and have transitioned away from the aspects of Albanian culture such as a lack of familiarity with the Albanian language.

By sharing personal experiences like immigration stories through online community programs, members can find ways to connect with their cultural roots. Other programs might focus on helping new immigrants learn English and find occupational opportunities (Jimenez, 2011). We found that even though many have adapted to American society, they still wish to connect to the Albanian culture and history (such as culinary connections), and having access to resources such as online forums in a digital community center would help address those aspirations. One key informant identified that a common challenge for new Albanian immigrants in the United States is fitting in with the society norms, but having a place where they can find others in similar situations is one named purpose of a digital community center. Valerie Kerxhalli, the former president of the parish council at St. Mary's Albanian Orthodox Church, explained how the community is searching for these safe spaces online that can contribute to a tighter knit and more welcoming community:



"and [recent immigrants] are...seeking those connections to their people, to their fellow countrymen." -Valerie Kerxhalli

Passing on the knowledge and understanding of Albanian history to the younger generations was perhaps the most common goal addressed by the interviewees for a digital community center. Other key informants identified a knowledge gap among the different generations of Albanian Americans whether it be the dissipation of the Albanian language or the fading away of customs such as cooking classic Albanian dishes. The passing on of history through intergenerational storytelling has a positive impact on community involvement, family connections, cultural awareness, and self identity (Flottemesch, 2013). One interviewee believes a digital community center can offer a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can communicate and learn from each other:



*"There's a ton of younger Albanians like myself, who feel that those conversations with our elders and with our community members need to happen. And I've been craving spaces where I could have those conversations."
- Etel Haxhiaj*

Key Partners

Key partners are a crucial aspect of any business. The Social Blueprint Business Design Framework describes them as the “the fundamental [partners] necessary to make this social venture or program successful.” Determining a successful partnership is done by “evaluating your value proposition and your key resources and making sure your partner is filling any gaps in either” (Belyh, 2020). The guiding questions that will be answered through our findings are as follows:

What types of partnerships are necessary to start and grow your business?

Who are current or possible key partners?

We identified some network partners for the various functions and stages of the center.

Short term key partners aid in getting a center started.

The first and often largest challenge to forming a community center is organizing funding and members. “These types of partnerships that may be a necessity during year one of a start-up will differ significantly from the nature of the required partnership in year 3” (Belyh, 2020). As Belyh points out, it is important to note that not all partnerships are eternal, some are used as stepping stones for growth and that is what a majority of the initial partnerships will be like. An organization might consider looking into local government grants and funding for community/cultural projects, as well as

privately run foundations. The city of Worcester, through the Worcester Cultural Development Department along with other local organizations provide funding for ventures such as the community center (see costs and revenue section). It would also be extremely beneficial to recruit the support of large community organizations that already have a large active member base and begin to run programs and events and offer resources prior to the initiation of any fully-funded projects.

Key partners can supplement community center events.

It is necessary to take advantage of other organizations that work with similar groups or run a similar center to collaborate on any events. These connections must be solid and “incorporate the characteristics of trust, quality, and commitment between [these] entities.” (Business Model Canvas, 2016). This can result in reaching far larger audiences, as well as hosting better events with combined funding, venues, and speakers (subject of event). These organizations would include groups that already have a solid footing in the community, such as St. Mary’s Church, MAASBESA, Facebook groups/pages, local businesses, immigrant resource organizations, housing assistance organizations, grant organizations including; The Worcester Cultural Association, Massachusetts Cultural Council, Greater Worcester Community Foundation, and The Fred Harris Daniels Foundation.

Community resources offered by the center can act as key partners.

Key partners are also beneficial when they provide a service that you don't already provide, or don't provide at quite the same level. This digital community center will also function as a database of community resources so Albanian Americans can have easy access to a collection of resources that would not otherwise be available to them. While a database may not seem to be key partners, these resources will perform essential tasks for the community that the center simply won't be able to provide (lack of funding, staff, knowledge, etc.) making these "partners" integral to the success of the center's goals.

A common theme throughout our key informant interviews was the impact that a database of community resources would have in assisting the community, especially new immigrants. Orion Stavre, the Associate Director of Marketing Technology at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and long-time St. Mary's Church member, pointed out the "struggle" in "understanding what America is like" almost immediately when introduced to the idea that a digital community center can provide a multitude of helpful community resources. Due to this importance, there is an opportunity to develop the center and resources to have good communication and collaboration as partners.

Assistance from the community is integral for the center to function.

While the community center may be built with serving the community in mind, it is very important to note just how much the community can help the center. The goal in designing a community center is to capture assets and community values in a way that optimizes individual skills within community events and programs. Individuals with specific talents/skills are often the backbone of a center without major revenue streams. Especially during the "construction" phase of this digital community center, searching for graphic designers, website designers, and any other useful roles often yields lots of work being done for free or discounted costs. It is also important to note the center's total reliance on the website's functionality. While it is nice to have volunteers helping to produce the site and maintain it, there should be a paid web designer ready should the site go down for any reason.



Photo by: Edlira Stefani

Key Activities and Key Resources

The key activities and key resources portion of the Social Blueprint Business Design Framework work together to address what activities support the value propositions and what resources are needed to make them happen. Questions that were answered in this section include:

What are key processes and activities that enable your value propositions?

What are key assets and resources required to start and grow the community center?

Using a combination of research on online communities and Worcester assets, interviews with members of Worcester's Albanian American community, and an analysis of online interaction, we address these.

Community needs, wants, and values inform the development of activities to generate interaction and participation within the center.

Members of Worcester's Albanian community identified many values and wants that can lend themselves to the development of programs to keep the community engaged and preserve Albanian culture.

Language

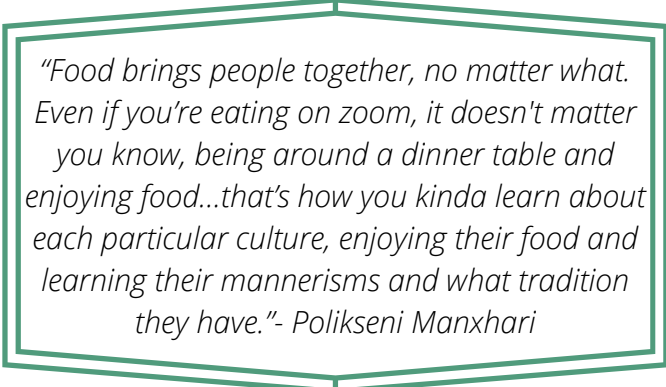
Many interviewees expressed wanting to see a language class. It is common in many immigrant communities for a high percentage of third generation immigrants to the United States to speak only English (Alba et. al., 2002). When asked about his experiences with Albanian language and culture, Orion Stavre, who has two young children, said:

"But I think for me, the biggest value is for my kids to actually be able to understand more about the Albanian culture, right? They were born here, they're being raised up here, and they have some exposure to the Albanian community, but they mostly don't necessarily understand a lot of things. Me and my wife made a point to start teaching them Albanian first, and then they'll learn English, right? But now, they started to almost forget all the Albanian language that they know. So they talk to us, exclusively in English at home, and, you know, they don't necessarily remember a lot of that. So they understand the language, but they don't get to practice it. Right. So I think that's probably a good angle. And I'm assuming that would be a very good attraction in terms of getting people involved."- Orion Stavre

Other community members expressed wanting a language class for their children, particularly those who grew up speaking English. Language is often a reflection of culture, but is inseparable from it in the way that it holds culture and history. It is very difficult for one to exist without the other (Jiang, 2000).

Key Values

When asked about important aspects of the community, many community members spoke about the Albanian American community's interaction with family, food, art, music and dance, and the importance of hard work and education. These answers came from a range of community members with different backgrounds, immigration statuses, and ages. Research on immigrant communities shows that it is common for family values to change across generations, especially among families that have lived in the United States for a longer period of time with the youngest observed generation being born in the United States. These changes are less visible in geographic locations where there are many immigrants of one nationality in an area for a long period of time (Phinney, Ong, and Madden, 2000). These values can be translated into activities and programs that support the value proposition of preserving Albanian culture and tradition. For example, when interviewed, Polikseni Manxhari said:



"Food brings people together, no matter what. Even if you're eating on zoom, it doesn't matter you know, being around a dinner table and enjoying food...that's how you kinda learn about each particular culture, enjoying their food and learning their mannerisms and what tradition they have."- Polikseni Manxhari

Activities such as online cooking classes could not only connect Albanian Americans with their culture, but also show Albanian culture to others. Among immigrants, traditional food often produces two main feelings: a sense of belonging in their culture, as well as a sense of otherness in their American community. However, the production and promotion of traditional food in immigrant communities often acts as a shared experience among immigrants, increasing community ties (Parasecoli, 2014). Interviewees expressed similar sentiments towards art, music, and dance in terms of what they would like to see from the community center. While community values shift and change over time and among different subpopulations, many different community members identified key values that can be turned into programs to promote cultural preservation and sharing.

Space for Conversation

Many interviewees also expressed the need for a place to have conversations online. For example, one interviewee who would like to remain anonymous wanted to have conversations with people with similar political views, but was having a hard time finding people who thought similarly in person in Worcester.

*"And I've been craving spaces where I could have those conversations, I have them with the progressive Albanian folks online."
- Anonymous Community Member*

This kind of connection is often sought in online spaces; communities and interpersonal connections form due to perceived similarities (Ren, Kraut, and Kiesler, 2007). This kind of online social capital, called bonding capital, is a common benefit of online communities (Norris, 2002). Other interviewees also expressed interest in getting to know other Albanians online.

Resources

One want expressed by community members is a place for resources to be shared, especially with new immigrants. When asked what she wants to see in an Albanian community center, Etel Haxhiaj said:

"For me, having a hub where people can get access to resources is just as important as anything else that might help us stay connected culturally."- Etel Haxhiaj

This sharing of resources would allow for an increase in social capital as it gives people access to something they would normally not have access to. The increase in social capital in community centers is well-researched and is often tied not only to the social relationships formed there, but to the resources provided at little to no cost (Colistra, Bixler, and Schmalz, 2017). Providing a database of resources provides a significant increase in social capital for Albanian community members; it is also something that community members would like to have provided.

Online resources are essential to the function of the digital community center.

There are a variety of online resources necessary for sustaining the key activities. In order to host programs, there needs to be an online space versatile enough to display them. For example, it would be difficult to host a database of community resources, an Albanian language class, and a forum discussion on a Facebook page. For this reason, a specifically designed website would be the best method of creating a home base for the community center. This website should act as a hub for the various services offered by the community center. Interviewees expressed the necessity of having a social media presence, especially for a center based fully online. This aligns with research about the importance of a social media presence in regards to small businesses maintaining brand recognition and relationships with community members (Jones, Borgman, and Ulusoy, 2015).

The use of social media also allows for people not heavily involved in Worcester's Albanian American community to get involved, as different social media platforms allow for an abundance of bridging social capital (Phua et.al., 2017).

Stakeholders, Stakeholder Relationships, and Channels

The stakeholders, stakeholder relationships, and channels sections of the Social Blueprint Business Design Framework primarily address who must be considered in the development of the community center and how the team will reach these people. Questions that will be answered include:

What is the profile of the stakeholders?

What stakeholder problems need to be addressed?

In what manner do we interact with our stakeholders?

How will you reach your customers and beneficiaries?

By collecting data from research, interviews with Worcester's Albanian American community, and analysis of online interactions with various community members, we address these questions and provide an understanding of who benefits from the project and how to reach them effectively.

Worcester's Albanian American community is diverse and made of many different subcommunities.

There are many different subpopulations within Worcester's Albanian American community. There were people of different religions, backgrounds, occupations, immigration statuses, ages, and connections to Albanian culture. Our interviewees had different ideas about what a community center can and should be. For example, one interviewee envisioned the community center as a database of resources for new immigrants while another imagined a collection of Albanian media and folktales. The Albanian American community in Worcester is very diverse. This was exemplified by Etel Haxhiaj in regards to St. Mary's Church and religion in Worcester:

"In terms of activities, which mostly happens within the confines of the Albanian Orthodox Church. And so for those folks who are part of [the church] community, I think that they have more of an ongoing engagement, than folks who are not. I think most of the Folks engaged with the Albanian church tend to be more from specific geographic areas of Albania, as well as more of a mono religious direction." - Etel Haxhiaj

Social media is an efficient way to interact with Worcester's Albanian American community.

Albanian Americans in the Worcester area gather in different spaces for different reasons. Currently, due to COVID-19 restrictions, most gatherings are relegated to online only. Of the online spaces, a popular source is the Albanian Community of Worcester Facebook page with almost 3,000 followers. One online space that provides resources and activities for all of Worcester's Albanian American community does not exist. The community center is intended to act as this online space, so it must not only provide activities and resources for the community, but also be welcoming to both heavily involved and disparate members of the community.

A significant aspect of the success of a community center depends on how to get community members to interact. Many community members noted the effectiveness of social media in reaching out to the community. The following was noted by an Albanian high school student in Worcester:

"If we share it, then our Albanian friends see it, they can share it, and it can reach a lot of people really quickly." - Albanian American High School Student

There is extensive literature on the existence of bridging and bonding social capital in online communities; in one study across many different types of online communities, varying levels of bridging and bonding social capital were found across all of them. In particular, groups centered

around a similar culture presented the highest amount of both bridging and bonding capital, building relationships both with people similar to them, as well as with people different than them across social divisions (Norris, 2002).

As for what specific social media to use, there were a variety of suggestions, often differentiated by age. High school students interviewed suggested Instagram because it is where they are most likely to interact, though one student suggested cross-platform posting with Facebook to promote to a bigger audience. Deni Hoxha, a college student with experience running social media pages, suggested Facebook as there is already an established following to build off from the Albanian Community of Worcester Facebook page. He also suggested supplementing it with Twitter or Instagram. Research indicates that different social media is ideal for building different kinds of online social capital: Twitter for bridging capital, Snapchat, followed by Facebook, for bonding capital. This is related to the structure and function of the various social media platforms: Twitter is for microblogging and users are much more likely to see posts from someone they do not know than on Facebook where posts are almost entirely from people users know (Phua et. al., 2017). Using multiple social media platforms is best for reaching different subpopulations within the community.

Costs and Revenue Streams

The cost and revenue streams sections of the Social Blueprint Business Design Framework consists of the financial considerations that must be assessed in order to run the digital community center. The financial flow can consist of any money moving into or out of the community center's possession, including transfers that occur upon a consistent basis, or more sporadically. The questions our team aimed to answer regarding this are:

Describe your key cost drivers. Which are fixed and which are variable?

Describe your key revenue streams. What type of margins is important for long-term sustainability?

Through the use of research into the cost estimations of different potential staffing selections, revenue streams, programs and resources to provide, we developed a rough estimate of where funding will be needed, and how to potentially obtain these funds.

Running a digital community center involves a wide array of costs.

While a digital community center holds the benefit of not requiring the expenses that arise from owning and operating a building, there are still associated costs that must be considered. The costs to be considered are the fixed costs, payments that remain constant, and variable costs, or those which either fluctuate or have no

regular set occurrence. Fixed costs include domain purchases, employee salaries, regular advertisements, and any events held on a regular basis. Variable costs associated with the digital community center will include one-time startup costs, program and events hosted at an irregular basis, improvements, refinements, and repairs that must be made, and other unforeseen factors.

Fixed costs are much easier to estimate. Starting with domain purchases, these consist of an initial purchase, and then a regular upkeep fee that occurs annually. Currently, our sponsors have purchased multiple domains. Therefore, after searching through multiple domain sites including Godaddy.com, Domain.com, Squarespace.com, and pc.domains, the upkeep estimate would be approximately \$20 per year. Another web asset that will be necessary for online programming and events will be a zoom license to provide the necessary multiple calls and accounts needed to host community members. Licenses range from \$150/ year for a nine person team, or \$200/ year for a team up to 100 people. These base prices cover basic zoom meetings, but other additional software can be purchased if needed. As for fixed employment costs, after researching multiple salary websites including Payscale.com, indeed.com, Salary.com, and glassdoor.com, and comparably.com, one director, one website designer, and 2-3 program managers could cost approximately \$250,000/year, a cost that start-up organizations are unlikely to be able to bear. A graphic designer also could cost about \$18/hour.

Variable costs that must be considered include an initial domain purchase, irregular community center events, and other miscellaneous purchases that must be made. Initial domains can cost anywhere between \$1 and \$5,000 depending on how potentially popular, or convenient, a domain title is. Long titles such as worcesteralbaniancommunitycenter.com are projected to be bought for under \$100, while wacc.com is currently owned and is estimated at around \$120. Other miscellaneous purchases can include all of the payments that must be made to become registered as a 501-c3 tax exempt organization, which can cost near \$900. Programs are one of the most variable costs because many can be run for free with the right resources, such as general meetings hosted on Zoom, but other programs, such as movie rentals, can legally require streaming rights, and a cooking class could be considered low cost for one person running a program, but expensive if supplies need to be purchased for 40 attendees.

The administrative structure is an important cost concern.

The largest and most difficult cost to be considered and established is the payment for employees. Employment is a fixed cost due to the nature of regular employee payment. However, to determine costs of employment required looking into the pay rates associated with employment and functions we needed to fill with employees. The administrative and working structure of a digital community center will dictate the amount of money which needs to be dedicated to those working through the center. In efforts to address these different methods of structuring, our team looked into how both physical community centers and online communities functioned. We determined an administrative structure which followed a traditional community center, one with a distinguished chain of command and dedicated employees for specific tasks, would serve this digital center best. The usual structure found in a physical community space lies more in line with our sponsors' wishes, as the structure

Basic Cost Breakdown			
Fixed Costs	Domain upkeep \$20/ Year	Zoom licensing \$150 - 200/year	Employees Approximated below
Variable Costs	Domain purchase \$1 - \$5000	Extra Zoom features \$600 +	Becoming 501-c3 \$900
Employment (medians)	Director \$75-90K/ year	Web Designer \$65-80K/ year	
Employment (Potentially volunteer)	Program leaders (per hire) \$50-60K /year	Event staffing (per hire) \$40-50K /year	Graphic designer \$18-22/hr

Table 1: Community center cost breakdown

tends to be more defined and rigid including managerial positions and an overseeing force. It does not heavily rely upon the community members leading the center's initiatives as it would occur online. However, in terms of the workforce, we determined following a structure more similar to that of an online community, one with a more free flowing structure: utilizing active and passionate community members to facilitate, lead, and moderate activities, forums, and other interactions that can be held online. This structure allowed for our team to capitalize on the benefits we found to be provided in an online community, while providing an overarching structure. The rigid managerial structure overseeing an online workforce is a necessary component. In Nathan Matias's study of online volunteer workforces, the volunteer moderation structure needed the oversight to maintain its structural integrity and workforce (N. Matias, 2019).

In its most formal iteration, at the top of the community center's structure would sit a board of directors, including a president, a financial head, a secretary, and then more members of the board hopefully consisting of a wide variety of community members. This board serves as the head of the community center making all major decisions in regards to the community center as normally would occur (Community center, 2016). A small managerial team serves as an overseer to the day to day function of the center. A director who manages all of the necessary coordination and needs of the center and oversees all other employees is

the head of this aspect of the structure and resorts to the board of directors. Finally, employees such as program leaders and event staff run programs, events, and are available to help members of the center. Other employment needs that would be required are a website designer and a graphic designer.



Photo by: Edlira Stefani

This structure is not immediately achievable, and will require time and effort to build up to. Early steps required will include developing a board of directors, becoming a non-profit and developing the actual center structure. Building a board of dedicated and diverse members is integral to successfully guide the organization/center. Next, establish the organization as a 501-c3 which will ensure people that the organization is non-profit. This is an essential element to laying the groundwork for funding and set the foundation for the final stage. Finally,

the organization will develop the initial center utilizing the structure outlined above. A simple startup structure will serve as a stepping-stone to begin work on these goals. This start up should include only a few members dedicated to these initial steps. This initial team dedicating time to getting the center of the ground will enable the process to be completed at the teams chosen pace depending on a set timeline.

We considered a volunteer structure where all members of the work structure except the director and website designer. This will enable a more reasonable amount of program leaders to be working in the center, and those jobs such as graphic designer could be filled by members of the community looking to donate their time and work in exchange for recognition and a chance for their work to be seen. Volunteer administrative structures have historically been mutually beneficial to both the volunteers and the organizations. Organizations rely on volunteers to carry out their objectives and services, and volunteers learn position-specific skills that hold educational values in their careers (Terry, Harder & Pracht, 2011). The online platform would require far less volunteers, as the primary positions that are recommended for a digital community center are activity coordinators or managers, and a handful of moderators for the community center platform if a community forum is active. Although the numbers for this structure can vary, it is still considerably less than those predicted at a physical center, which would require more

people just to maintain building facilities.

A volunteer structure is one that our team is confident will work after conversations with Deni Hoxha and Edlira Avdulla. Deni specifically noted that many of the graphic designs, and collaborative efforts he utilized for Team Albanians were volunteer efforts. His group received high quality works to utilize and new members and participants of his page, while those who created work used by the page received credit and a new network to expand where their work is noticed. Edlira Avdulla is a bank loan officer who recently created a rapidly growing Facebook page named Gocat e Boston. She made a note of the collaborations received from businesses and members who volunteered time and resources. These collaborative efforts help to support their groups, bring in new members, and expand their support networks.

"One of the things that has been very successful with us was adding a business day, we have to this week, we didn't want to be flooded with marketing material all week long. So we did with the designated one of the days and we made it Tuesday, a business day and small businesses and many of them, they live and they work in Worcester."

- Edlira Avdulla

A volunteer structure would be one that helps to drastically reduce cost of the center. Along with this benefit, this form of volunteer structure capitalizes on passionate members of the community, and members who also benefit from their contributions to the center helps to create a network around the community center.

There are multiple avenues to build revenue or reduce costs.

Our team explored multiple options for building a consistent base of revenue, and solutions we have developed are donations, sponsorships, partnerships, funding grants, and potential membership and activity fees. Creating a digital community center will require an initial influx of funds for start up costs. One method which has the potential for a large amount of funding is to apply for grants. Grants provide not only a method of gaining funds, but also a chance to generate a new support system from those providing grants, whether that be a government organization, or another other. Some current organizations providing grants are:

The Worcester Cultural Association

Massachusetts Cultural Council

Greater Worcester Community Foundation

The Fred Harris Daniels Foundation

The Worcester Cultural Coalition provides cultural and artistic support grant is being run partly through the City of Worcester, and in partnership with Discover Central Mass. Their plan consists of a 10 year cultural initiative in which it is their goal to help fund and support the many cultures of Worcester. They have laid out a list of their top 20 priorities and number three is: "Promote neighborhoods based on their unique assets – like cultural spaces, history, college campuses, events, parks, architecture, food, restaurants, and shopping" (A cultural plan 2019, and Augustus, Williams & Lisi 2019). Along with this major Worcester based initiative, are the Massachusetts Cultural Council working to provide grants to cultural organizations especially in need of Covid-19 relief, and the Greater Worcester Community Foundation, providing a mini grant program offering organizations up to \$5000 with start up support (Cultural Plan Activation 2020). Many of these grants will be much more attainable through a 501-c3 non-profit status, and would provide a potential funding and support benefit to their organization. The Fred Harris Daniels Foundation provided multiple grants per year to those in the greater Worcester County. The two grants they provide to focus on are their capital grants, which can be requested by an organization. Some of these grants have gone up to \$200,000. Their other grant is a lower level program and operations annual grant which is capped at \$5,000 (Fred Harris 2020).

Two recommended strong sources that we also were initially considering were partnerships and sponsorships from the Albanian community. During our conversations held with MAASBESA, and with a key member of the church, our team was able to confirm these plans would contribute to the funding plan. MAASBESA held their own initial research into developing a community center in Quincy, and confirmed individual members were willing to donate to their cause, and businesses would have been willing to advertise their business through and provide a donation to the potential community center. As just mentioned above, Edlira Avdulla saw success with events she held for Gocat e Boston such as their business day, a once a week dedicated day where Albanians could advertise their businesses on Edlira's group Facebook page. Small events like these generate a flow of traffic benefitting both her page, and her members either in need of a service, or advertising their business on the page. When discussing the Albanian Festival with the church members, it was brought up that individual Albanian business owners would donate up to \$5000, or other necessary supplies. They felt this generosity could extend in donations and support to a community center. If the community is in support of the center, it will be something they come to support and help keep running.

A very similar approach would be the partnerships. While some partnerships would provide donations or advertisements as mentioned above, there is also the opportunity to develop outside

partnerships such as a collaboration with the Worcester Historical Museum. Organizations such as this, and the Worcester Art Museum have resources and the ability to support a community center, not with money, with thematic program and initiative support. One current example is the St. Mary's church working with the Worcester Historical Museum in a collaborative project. The church is funding the project, but the Museum provides some of the experience and knowledge needed to carry out the project. Both organizations benefit through either a new flow of members, or an educational opportunity for their community. Collaborations like this between organizations builds a symbiotic relationship which raises awareness of both organizations to members outside of themselves, and builds a network of support, and brings in potential new members and sources of funding.

Another method of building revenue is through membership and event fees. Membership and event fees bring in a consistent source of income from members, and can be utilized to better serve them. It is one more stream available for generating a self sustaining method of funding.

Differentiation and Magnitude

The Differentiation and Magnitude sections are what make the Social Blueprint Business Design Framework distinct from the Business Canvas Model. These sections explain what makes the digital community center unique compared to other organizations and how much of an impact a platform might have in the future. The team aims to answer the following questions for each section:

How is your business design unique and better than current competitive offerings?

How big are the economic and impact market opportunities?

How much of the impact market opportunities can you capture?

Through investigating literature on the advantages and differences in developing and operating an online community center versus a physical center and interviewing various members of Worcester's Albanian community, we have developed a series of findings to answer these questions based on the Framework.

Digital community centers offer the opportunity to provide a database of information and resources that are navigable and accessible to the Albanian community.

There is a lack of resources for new immigrants on how to integrate into American society. While a physical center

would offer the chance to hold educational, professional classes for adapting to everyday life in the United States, a digital center can accomplish these same lessons conveniently on a virtual meeting call. A digital center can also provide a database for the resources necessary to integrate into society, such as how to apply for a driver's license or how to build credit.

When asked what obstacles the team may face in creating an online community center, founder of the quickly-growing Gocat e Boston Facebook page Edlira Avdulla found that compiling and organizing a place for these resources into a database that outlines "the first steps of when you come to the US" would be extremely beneficial in an online center but also be very difficult as there is "a lot of information here and there" but nowhere is it organized and explained all in one place. The online community center could also encourage online communication where members can provide assistance and guidance on how to utilize various resources. Proposing a platform where members can exchange ideas allows the community to engage in a collaboration of knowledge, consisting of offering knowledge to others in ways which benefit members individually, but also contributing to the overall value of social capital for the community (Faraj, Jarvenpaa, & Majchrzak, 2011).

Orion Stavre, the associate director of marketing technology at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and long-time St. Mary's Church member immediately pointed out the impact that creating a place for resources for the immigrant community

could produce. After explaining the difficulty in communication due to the language disconnect between Albanian and English and how this can make immigrants feel out of place, he went on to explain how this could be a major accomplishment of a digital community center if it can attract immigrant members to participate:

"Creating some sort of an online place where that is provided, like resources. I think that would be a big driver, especially for the new people who are coming here."- Orion Stavre

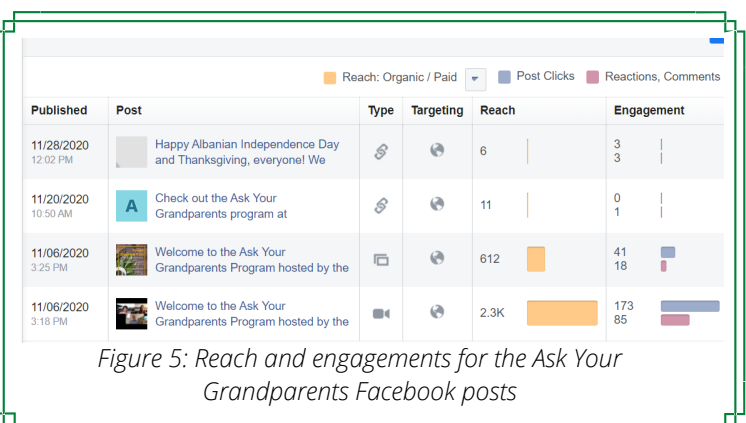
Digital community centers diminish the concern of costs and revenue streams that a physical community center would entail.

Perhaps the most important long-term benefit of developing an online community center platform is the minimal operation, construction and maintenance costs. A digital community center avoids the considerations of the cost of a building and thus encourages that budget to go elsewhere such as developing higher quality community programs. Orion Stavre recognizes this economic benefit of a digital center by mentioning the high cost of a physical community center as "a lot larger of an investment" that is "harder to operate." he ability to omit cost and revenue considerations when

envisioning an online community space allows our sponsors to dedicate their planning time elsewhere, such as establishing the initial programs and community resources. Overall, the digital community center design reduces the commitment to allocating budgets to funding building development and the cost of labor.

Ask Your Grandparents Program

The team prepared the Ask Your Grandparents program (proposal in Appendix F, website screenshots in Appendix E) as a way to encourage storytelling between members of the Albanian American community while also addressing concerns such as the loss of Albanian culture and generational divides. The program was promoted on a group run Facebook page, Ask Your Grandparents, and then shared with other more popular Albanian pages from there. We introduced the program with both an introductory video with a well known community member, as well as digital posters (see Appendix G) in both English and Albanian.



The program ran for about three weeks (November 6 - December 1). Despite a reach of 2,700 people, almost 350 page engagements (see Figure 4), and 87 website visits (see Figure 5), there were no submissions; however we received one submission after the deadline from someone who was directly asked to submit.

Challenges of developing a community center program.

One of our biggest hurdles was effectively promoting the Ask Your Grandparents program. While it was seen and shared by many people, there were very few comments. The program was posted on the Ask Your Grandparents Facebook page with no original followers and had 15 followers by the deadline. The posts were also shared to more popular pages by community members. While many community members expressed interest in the program either through Facebook shares or verbal feedback, none of them actually submitted. The ineffectiveness of this promotion could be due to a multitude of factors denoted by community members:

- *One interviewee expressed that the community did not know who we were, and that made them less likely to trust us and participate and share personal stories. They explained that as outsiders of the Albanian American community, people did not know why we were doing the program and why it was us doing it, not someone within the community.*



- *The program was not explicitly said to be a pilot program for a feasibility study of a community center, just that it was being sponsored by WPI. One interviewee expressed that this may have made people less likely to participate, as it is seen as less like a community initiative and more like a study.*
- *We received feedback from potential participants that the directions were too open ended and they were not sure what to do. To address the miscommunication, we created clarifying posts on Facebook that explained, in detail, a specific type of submission entry. The single participant asked us directly what she should create, but after reading the program guidelines on the website, decided to make something different that still fit within the guidelines. This supports the idea that the instructions were confusing.*
- *One interviewee pointed out that many of the older Albanian Americans only speak Albanian, the program being entirely in English turned some people away.*

- The program required a lot of effort: reading the posts, communicating with a grandparent, developing a submission entry, and then submitting it on a different form. Some interviewees pointed out that this is a lot of effort that requires a lot of time, and that may have turned some people away.
- The program has a significant crossover with the Worcester Historical Museum's Oral History program. One interviewee pointed out that this likely could have caused confusion over what the project was for.

The single submission for the Ask Your Grandparents Program reflects the literature on intergenerational interactions in immigrant communities.

The program received one submission from the nine-year-old son of a community member the team reached out to directly for a submission. The submission is a video, almost six minutes in length, of the child giving a presentation on his maternal grandparents. A presentation is overlaid on top of the video with words and pictures. The participant talked about topics during the video such as the grandparents' lives in Albania, their lives in the United States (Figure 7), their favorite snacks (Figure 8), fun facts, and family pictures. In the video, the child mentioned that he enjoyed talking to his grandparents and doing the presentation, as well as thanking WPI for the opportunity to present

"I would like to thank WPI for making this possible. I think it was really fun interviewing my grandparents and setting it up."
- Program Participant

His mother reported that she has been inspired to have an interview with her own grandmother.

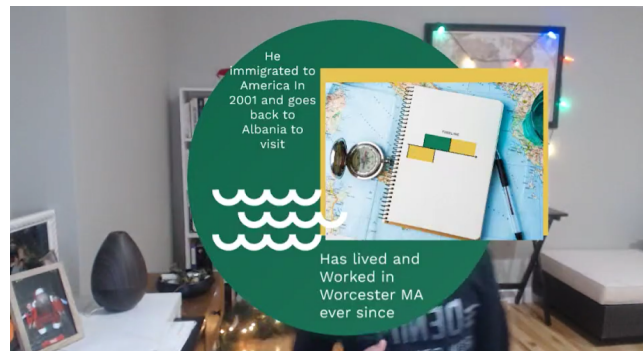


Figure 7: The participant explaining his grandfather's immigration to the United States

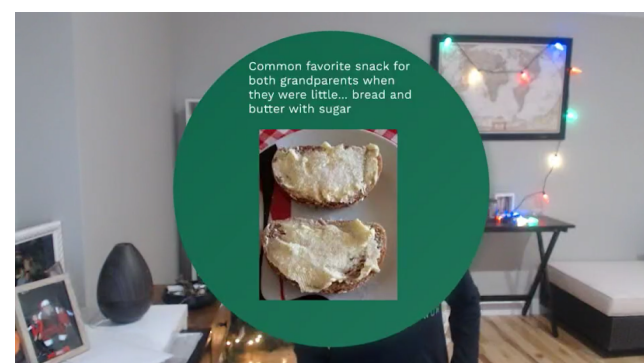
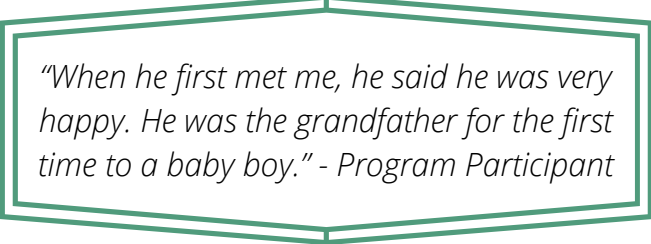


Figure 8 The participant discussing his grandparents' favorite snack

One of the main topics of the presentation was the grandparents' lives in Albania. He discussed where his grandparents grew up, their favorite foods, and their favorite activities and toys as a child. In immigrant communities, family stories are one of the most common topics in intergenerational storytelling as not to forget family history and encourage connections to cultural identity (Huisman, 2014; Yoshida et al., 2013). The presentation also included a section on the grandparents' favorite snacks, which are popular in Albania. This focus on traditional food aligns with the literature on the importance of food in immigrant communities and families (Parasecoli, 2014).

The participant talked about how his grandparents felt when he was born:



"When he first met me, he said he was very happy. He was the grandfather for the first time to a baby boy." - Program Participant

It is common for intergenerational storytelling to deepen familial bonds (Yoshida et. al., 2013). By reflecting on the successes, challenges and limitations of the program development process, we created an infographic explaining the key steps in developing future community programs as referenced in Appendix H.



Photo by: Morgan Deangelis

Conclusions & Recommendations

Conclusions

Although the *Ask Your Grandparents* program struggled to elicit participation from the community through submitting digital storytelling multimedia to our online community platform, we explored the reasons and limitations behind the outcome of the program. We found that many people expressed interest and

Initiating a community program or organization is challenging and requires time and careful consideration.

curiosity in exploring the program, but this did not convert to community involvement and participation in the Ask Your Grandparents program in the end. It should be noted, however, the significance

Conclusions & Recommendations

of the entry that we did receive. The participant dedicated much time and consideration into creating a beautifully detailed video entry for the program, and reflected on her experience in her submission email that she and her son enjoyed taking part in the program and learning from their grandparents. Although the participant did report the valuable potential of the program when we introduced the purpose and objective, it required us to elicit that single submission. We recognized this challenge in conversion from curiosity to involvement as an important consideration for improving the program in the future because determining an effective way to get people involved in a new community organization is essential to creating a successful community center.

The limitations that the team faced in test-running the Ask Your Grandparents program primarily fell under the categories of time constraints, community views, and opinions on how the program was portrayed and understood on social media. In developing and organizing the program, we felt very limited on time and resources to spread the word and initiate the program on the various Facebook pages we had available.

The proposal of a digital community center for the Albanian American community in Worcester stimulated considerable community interest.

From Facebook responses and website interactions from the community, it was clear that we were able to reach out to a considerable number of people with our pilot *Ask Your Grandparents* program and digital community center initiative. We received thousands of views on our introductory video post on Facebook as well as almost 100 interactions and views on our website. From our conversations with the community about the Ask Your Grandparents program and the idea of a



Photo by: Ardian Murraj

digital community center, as well as analyzing the number of positive interactions we received on our Facebook page, we are confident that a digital community center could contribute to the community. The program alone generated both verbal and online interest, as key informants consistently shared that they were excited to learn more about the program and understand its purpose or value in envisioning a digital community space.

However, as discussed in the previous recommendation, there are several limitations that arise when trying to create a new community program. There was an observable disruption between the transformation from community interest to community involvement and participation based on the results of our program development.

Development of the executive and administrative structure is a critical first step in the design of the digital community center.

Our group focused on exploring the fundamentals and preliminary groundwork for organizing and creating a digital community center. The volunteer administrative structure helps to achieve early goals in the operation process while minimizing the concern of costs and revenue streams. Volunteers are often also passionate and dedicated members of the community who seek the benefit of experience, as they are not driven by

money to accomplish tasks around a digital community center.

Through our research into the structure and function of different physical community centers and online communities, we suggest a strong executive administrative structure be developed to ensure the proper execution of a digital community center. While the executive board handles the overarching organization for the center, they would also structure the administrative team dedicated to the day to day functions of the center. They would serve to help general members, run programs, and assist those with a need for help or support. Utilizing community members dedicated to the community center will provide a passionate team to work with. While the reasoning behind this is provided in the following section, the one concern with this structure was developing the management system. They would serve as the leading force ensuring day to day function runs smoothly, working to build their team of community members, and communicating needs to the executive board.

The Albanian American community in Worcester values exploring their culture and history while sharing their traditions with others. The community could benefit from having a communal space to host interactions.

In Worcester, there are several community organizations that are

dedicated in some way to the Albanian culture and heritage, such as the Worcester Historical Coalition, the Albanian Festival management, and the men, women, and youth groups at St. Mary's Church. However, there is no active umbrella organization that governs and features the Albanian culture and heritage exclusively in Worcester.

One of the conflicts we had with running the *Ask Your Grandparents* program was the coincidence of a similar community program operating out of the Worcester Historical Museum with Worcester's Albanian and Latino communities called *WorcesterTalks*, where the community is invited to give an oral history account to share their histories. This initiative has a comparable purpose to the purpose of the Ask Your Grandparents program. Although this may have led to a limitation in our program outcome, *WorcesterTalks* did educate us about the possibility of collaborating with organizations like the Worcester Historical Museum to develop meaningful and lasting programs that the Albanian community would engage in and enjoy while also learning and teaching others about their culture and traditions.

Recommendations

The recommendations allocate ways to go about accomplishing how to envision a digital community center as well as how to further develop the center in the future.

We recommend developing a detailed administrative structure. A small team dedicating time to finalizing decisions concerning structure and function will be necessary for an initial start, and then a full dedicated team will be required in the future.

We recommend gathering a small team to initially dedicate time to fleshing out the structure we have provided. The small startup team can structure the needs of the board, and initial plans and aspirations. Through this effort, most of the initiative that will be required to start the community center can be addressed in a timeframe easy for those working on them. The team could complete initial paperwork and get a board of directors developed as it is essential to core aspects of the community center such as daily and overarching function and experiences, membership, and appeal. Below outlines the development of the center a few years down the line.

We suggest organizing a board of directors to lead and oversee the community center. The board of directors would serve as the overarching decision makers, work to develop the inner and outer workings, and make decisions regarding the administrative structure. The board should contain at least one president, treasurer, and secretary, along with other members. These are essential to achieve a 501-c3 non-profit status. This status will play a key role in receiving grants and gathering other donations and

resources. We also would recommend incorporating a vice president into the administrative structure. Although not a necessity for a non profit system, it serves to balance the workload of those leading the board. In terms of who serves on the board, we recommend starting with a minimum of four more board members to include members on the board that are not on the lead executive team. Board members should encompass all aspects of the community through the representation in the board members. As the center expands, the board will be able to develop sub committees to balance a larger workload. A financial board could hold multiple people but be led by the treasurer or another suggested committee head for example. Other potential committees we foresee a potential use are: Marketing and Public Relations, a committee dedicated to outreach, support, and social media efforts, program development, a committee dedicated to developing activities and events for the center, a fundraising board, one dedicated to just the acquisition of more resources while financial handles balancing the books.

We recommend a dedicated director to handle daily necessities of the community center and to lead the volunteer workforce.

We recommend one dedicated director of the community center hired by the executive board. They should serve as the overarching manager to everything

occurring within the center including organizing volunteer work schedules, programs, support provided to the community, and any other facets that may be developed. While initially it could be served through a volunteer during the first few years of development, this role should consist of a paid member as a volunteer cannot dedicate the same time and energy as someone committing to this job full time. It also will become a role requiring more time and energy once a center is fully functioning 3-5 years down the line as the position becomes more of a commitment.

The volunteer administrative structure helps to achieve early goals in the operation process while minimizing the concern of costs and revenue streams. A digital community center encompassing a volunteer structure is temporarily feasible and is a valuable proposal for initial community center development. Since the volunteers will most likely be recruited and contacted through other Albanian American community organizations, such as those at the St. Mary's Church or the Worcester Cultural Coalition, a volunteer-based administration can also strengthen bridging social capital between preexisting, more established community organizations that can encourage funding and further develop a paid employee system that will open up more job opportunities in the future. Therefore, a volunteer-based administration is a recommended structure for management for initial community center development.

We suggest contacting existing community organizations that are familiar

with managing and developing community operations for assistance in administration and structuring community activities. The lack of the existence of a single Albanian-centered organization in Worcester presents one of the strongest arguments in favor of developing a digital community center we suggest contacting a variety of organizations (as referenced in the Key Partners section of the Social Blueprint Business Design Framework) for assistance and guidance on how to manage a community center.

We suggest creating an asset map to investigate the Albanian community strengths and assets in the greater Worcester area.

Asset mapping creates a visual of the assets for a particular group which can help to better understand the community's capabilities and shared interest. Mapping these community assets helps visualize the networks of service organizations, community organizations, neighborhood associations, and any other groups that serve the community (Burns, 2012). There are three tiers of asset mapping (Baird, 2005):

1. Institution: Identify public institutions within the community (e.g., schools, libraries, hospitals)
2. Citizen Association: Identify platforms for civic engagement and participation (e.g., housing boards, youth groups, clubs)

3. Individual, which identify individuals with connections or capacity to lead change within the community (e.g., elected officials, school principals, police commissioners, pastors)

Mapping these can help to clarify and better understand what community strengths can be taken advantage of to increase community participation and how these assets can be networked through the space to strengthen the community.

Individual assets can be collected from interviews or conversations with various members in the community, otherwise known as community-engaged mapping. Individual assets are essential to an asset map for a community center as it is the individual who creates content and will lead events/programs. Community spaces can easily be improved by the talents of an individual (especially in an online setting), therefore expanding the network of skilled individuals to be utilized by the center in the future. We suggest using a Google map which can be accessed by future participants of key informant interviews who can provide additional insight into the individual talents and skills of the community.

Asset mapping can also yield qualitative data on the form of experiences, perspectives, and relayed by community members. These analyses will give a better understanding of the current assets the community has to work with to help develop the digital community center and programs. Our preliminary asset map can be referenced in Appendix K.

Start with a familiar, easy-to-run activity and promote the purpose and description of the operation promptly.

The *Ask Your Grandparents* program faced several challenges. When the program was announced on Facebook, the Albanian community had approximately four weeks to understand our project goal, explore our Facebook posts and website, create a form of digital storytelling to share an experience they had with their parents or grandparents, then submit it to our website. We found that more time was required for the community to understand what they were contributing to our project. From the conversations we had with community members, we recommend that running a community program or developing a reliable platform for the community to interact with requires more time for understanding and explaining the purpose and background for the program and therefore developing an incentive.

The responses we received from the community relating to promoting our program mainly identified questions relating to trustworthiness and outlining an incentive for participating. Based on the feedback of those we interviewed, they were confused as to whether we were running the program, if our sponsors were running the program, or if it was a combination of the two. In the future, we suggest first clarifying the organization responsible for developing the program throughout the promotion process. Informants were also unclear as to the

reason for participating in the program, whether it pertains to the overall purpose in investigating our project or a form of motivation as a personal benefit for submitting an entry. For these reasons, we suggest designing an incentive to motivate participation such as a contest platform, a fundraiser, or publicity that encourages the community to engage in newly designed programs.

We suggest channeling the community's interest by developing an online communication platform to generate conversations and potential involvement in the community center.

We recommend establishing a conversational platform to accompany a digital center where members can become connected and further strengthen community relationships through an online program or platform. Facebook is an accessible platform that was able to reach a broad audience in a short amount of time, and this platform was supported as a reliable method to reach the community about our ideas and initiatives. We suggest utilizing Facebook as a communication platform to accompany programs to encourage the Albanian community to explore different ideas and improvement possibilities that assist the operation understanding for both the community members and those who originally designed it. Developing an online space to hold conversations was also identified as a purpose that a digital

center could serve the community. This communication forum can be improved into recurring Zoom meetings which could serve a multitude of purposes and illuminate the various interests of the community.

We suggest adapting several programs and classes to an online format to allow for a variety of people in the community to connect to their homeland.

Utilize the online community platform to generate involvement and participation, then expand upon the community activities and resources to be adapted to a physical community center.

Key informant interviews illuminated that a digital community center would be a great startup project, especially amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, but having a place where the community can meet physically to talk and interact face-to-face presents a more valuable benefit in the long term. Albeit, the possibilities that an online platform can provide in terms of a database or reaching out to other communities virtually also has predicted positive outcomes. Therefore, we recommend initiating a digital community center while working closely with the community to address their needs and aspirations, then developing that platform into an interactive website for a physical community center in the future. creating an online community center platform into a multi-feature website that serves as the foundation for a physical community center include a farther outreach in the community and expanded program and activity possibilities that both contribute to increasing and improving social capital.

We investigated a series of possible programs that reflect the Albanian culture and establish connections with the country. Social online programs are especially important now during the COVID-19 pandemic when families and friends cannot connect in person. One activity that can incorporate multiple age groups is an educational online language class. These would benefit new Albanian immigrants who might be struggling with learning English in their home or occupation as well as the younger or more modernized Albanian American population who wish to learn the Albanian language to understand and connect more with their roots. Similarly, a pen pal program between Albanians in different countries also encourages international connections and the expansion of cultural understanding. These pen pal relationships have the opportunity to develop into sponsored trips for visits to Albania in the future.

A limitation we faced in our key informant interviews was the lack of conversations with those under the age of 18. The development of an online community center depends on collaboration with the community based on a diverse range of demographics. Two possible programs that could be adapted to attract the younger generations is

hosting online video games or live streaming television or movies that are accompanied by online discussion platforms so participants can communicate while interacting in an activity. Utilizing social media to spread the word about

these programs could assist in reaching a broader, more diverse audience and works to incorporate the pan-Albanian diaspora by virtual means of interaction and socialization.



Photo by: Edlira Stefani

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Appendix A: Consent Script

We are a group of students at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, collaborating with the Albanian Cultural Heritage Center to envision a community space for the Albanian American community here in Worcester. We have invited you to this interview because we believe your input will help determine possible cultural programs, events, and social platforms to realize this project. Do you mind if we record this meeting so we can review it later? If not, we will take notes throughout the interview for review later on. Additionally, do you mind if we quote you in our report? If you prefer, we can also quote anonymously, so you would not be identified.

Our project will analyze how to connect the Albanian American community in Worcester by conceptualizing a community space that aims to bridge the current community gaps through cultural programs, events, and social platforms. When we finish the project, it will be available online, and we can send it to you via email if you would like. If you are confused by any questions in our interview or would prefer not to answer, let us know, and we will rephrase the question or move to the next one. Any questions before we begin?

Appendix B: Photo/Video Permission Form

Printed Name: _____ Date: _____

Gender (Optional): _____

Age (Optional): _____

Generation (Optional):

- First (Immigrated to the U.S.)
- Second (Child of one or more first-generation)
- Third (Child of one or more second-generation)
- Other (fourth, fifth, etcetera)

Email: _____

Interviewers: Matt Rotman, Jillian Doyle, Luca Ialongo, Savannah Parker

I understand that this interview and any photographs, audio, or video recordings are part of scholarly research by the students named above. I permit the following (check all that apply)

- May be used for educational research purposes.
- May include my name.
- May include other demographics collected above (Gender, Age, Generation)
- May be included in a WPI publication or exhibit.
- May be included in an online documentary.
- MAY be used but DO NOT include my name
- Other (explain)

Appendix C: General Key Informant Interview Questions

1. We would love to hear a little bit about yourself! Could you talk a little bit about your experiences, and what experiences you have with Worcester's Albanian American community?
2. Do you think a digital community center based in Worcester is a good idea for the Albanian American community? Why or why not?
3. How do you see a community center best serving the community, and what needs could be better met?
4. What significance could a community center provide the community?
5. What would you like a community center to provide for you, or for members of the community you know?
6. Do you know any people who identify as Albanian American with skills that could benefit the community? If so what might these skills be?
7. What locations are most important/useful for you and people you know? Could you elaborate why?
8. Based on our promotion posts you've seen for the Ask Your Grandparents program on social media, what is your initial impression or feedback on the program?
9. From your own experiences with your involvement in the community, how do you think we can generate community participation? What key themes or strategies should we undertake? What difficulties do you think we might face and do you have any suggestions for how to best address them?

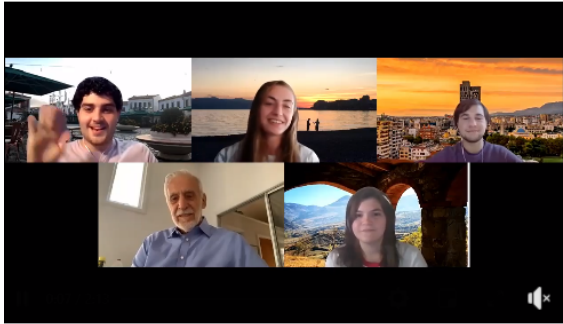
Appendix D: Facebook Posts for Ask Your Grandparents Program

Ask Your Grandparents
November 6 at 3:18 PM · 🌐

Welcome to the Ask Your Grandparents Program hosted by the WPI Albanian Project Center!

The Ask Your Grandparents Program is a storytelling event encouraging young people to connect with their grandparents through stories. We are creating a community exhibition to showcase grandparents' stories, as represented by their grandchildren.

We would love to have all of you participate and to share this with anyone you think you be interested as well! This program will be open t... [See More](#)



2,285 People Reached 255 Engagements


[Boost Post](#)

👍❤️ You and 12 others 1 Comment 8 Shares

Ask Your Grandparents
November 6 at 3:25 PM · 🌐

Welcome to the Ask Your Grandparents Program hosted by the WPI Albanian Project Center!

Visit our website to view the program description, learn more about our team, submit your own entry, and learn more about this: <https://worcesteraacc2020.wixsite.com/.../ask-your...> [✔️](#)... [See More](#)



611 People Reached 58 Engagements

[Boost Post](#)

❤️👍 You and 2 others 2 Shares

Ask Your Grandparents
November 20 at 10:50 AM · 🌐

Check out the Ask Your Grandparents program at <https://worcesteraacc2020.wixsite.com/.../ask-your...> [✔️](#) for a complete program description, rules, and ways to participate!

We want to encourage storytelling that passes knowledge from seniors to the younger generation through sharing interesting stories about the community!

Submit some photos of your grandparents with a short description or story to be featured in an online showcase of Albanian-American stories!

WORCESTERAACC2020.WIXSITE.COM

Ask Your Grandparents | Worcester Albanian American Community Center

10 People Reached 1 Engagement

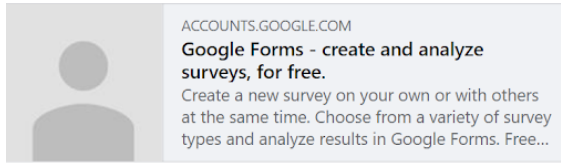
[Boost Post](#)

👍 1

Ask Your Grandparents
6d · 🌐

Happy Albanian Independence Day and Thanksgiving, everyone! We hope you could spend time with your family (either virtually or physically) and eat a great holiday meal! We would love it if you could take the time to find or take a photo with your parents or grandparents and write a story about why they are important to you! Use the link below to submit to the Ask Your Grandparents program and share your story with the community!

<https://forms.gle/bSJSYjW3bFRxyGnJ8> [✔️](#)

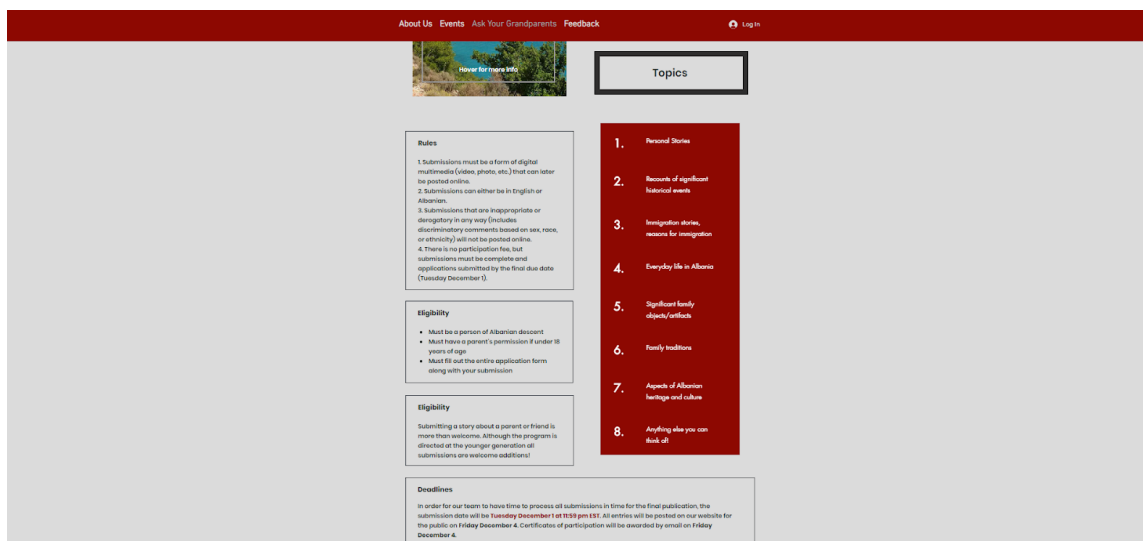
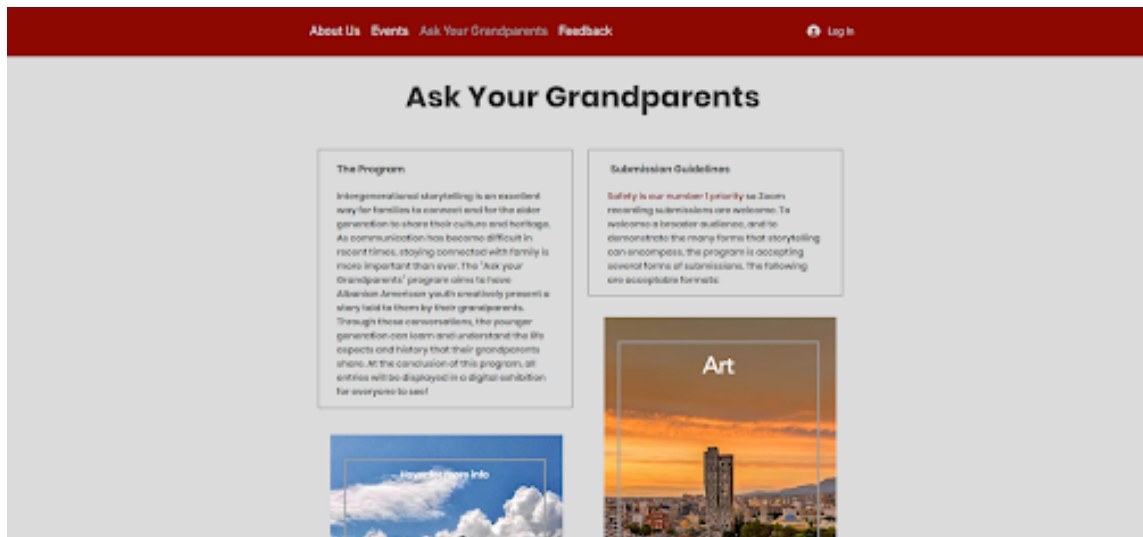
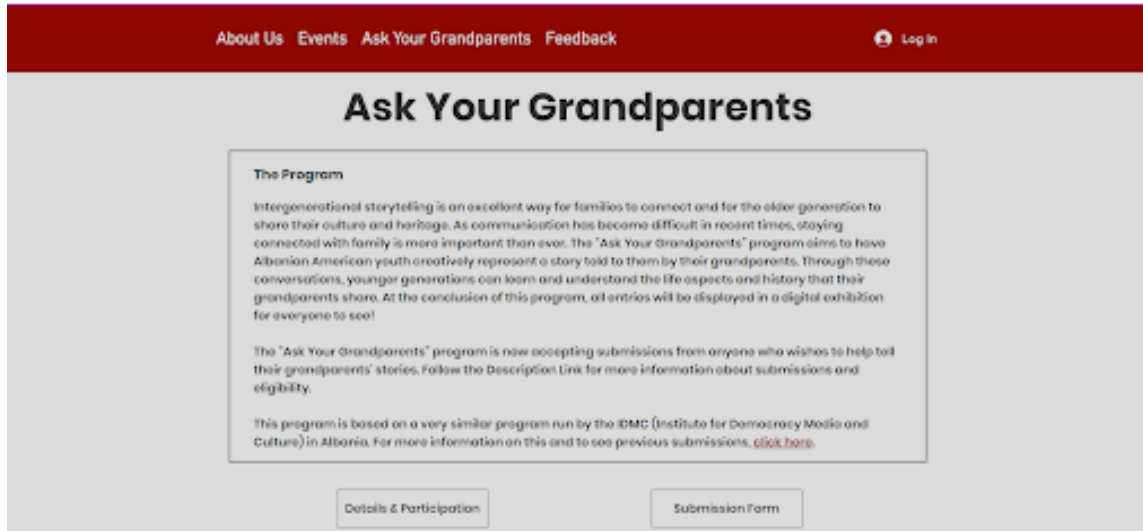


5 People Reached 6 Engagements

[Boost Post](#)

👍 2

Appendix E: Ask Your Grandparents Website



Appendix F: Ask Your Grandparents Program Proposal

Ask Your Grandparents Program Description

Description:

Intergenerational storytelling is an excellent way for families to connect and for the older generation to share their culture and heritage. As communication has become difficult in recent times, staying connected with family is more important than ever. The Ask Your Grandparents program aims to have Albanian American young people creatively represent a story told to them by their grandparents. Through these conversations, the younger generation can learn and understand the life aspects and history that their grandparents share. At the conclusion of this program, all entries will be displayed in a digital exhibition for everyone to see!

Some topics you can submit entries on include:

- Personal Stories
- Recounts of significant historical events
- Immigration stories, reasons for immigration
- Everyday life in Albania
- Significant family objects/artifacts
- Family traditions
- Aspects of Albanian heritage and culture
- Any other related topics

Submission Guidelines:

To welcome a broader audience, and to demonstrate the many forms that storytelling can encompass, the program is accepting several forms of submissions. Zoom or phone communication are welcome and encouraged! The following are acceptable formats:

Story Photos: Put together up to three photos that illuminate a conversation shared with your grandparents. The photos should convey something your grandparents would like to share with you. Finally, write a short paragraph that conveys your feelings about the photographs.

Videos: Record a conversation with your grandparents asking about what they did when they were younger. Ask about where they used to work, their favorite meal, their voyage to America, or even a love story. The video submission cannot be more than four (4) minutes and must be accessible by email (MP4, MPEG, etc.).

Essays: Write a short story or essay describing your grandparents' favorite memories or past life events while reflecting upon your conversation with them. Were you surprised? Did you learn something new? Touch upon these questions in an essay!

Appendix F: Ask Your Grandparents Program Proposal

Art: Create a drawing, painting, poem, or any other art project that you believe best expresses your grandparent's stories. Your artwork can be a snapshot of the story or a focal point that best represents the lives and memories they have experienced and what you have learned through your conversation. Finally, include a short description of your artwork. Works should either be scanned in, a photo if 3- dimensional, or emailed if a document.

Eligibility:

- Must be a person of Albanian descent
- Must have a parent's permission if under 18 years of age
- Must fill out the entire application form along with your submission

Rules:

1. Submissions must be a form of digital multimedia (video, photo, etc.) that can later be posted online.
2. Only one submission can be entered per participant.
3. Submissions can either be in English or Albanian.
4. Submissions that are inappropriate or derogatory in any way (includes discriminatory comments based on sex, race, or ethnicity) will not be posted online.
5. There is no participation fee, but submissions must be complete and applications submitted by the final due date (Tuesday December 1).

Deadlines:

In order for our team to have time to process all submissions in time for the final publication, the submission date will be **Tuesday December 1** at 11:59 pm EST. All entries will be posted on our website for the public on **Friday December 4.**

Appendix G: Ask Your Grandparents Posters



The poster on the left shows the promotional poster for the program, *Ask Your Grandparents*, in English

The poster on the right shows the promotional poster for the program, *Ask Your Grandparents*, in Albanian



DEVELOPING A PROGRAM

Our guide and recommendations to developing your own programs

By Jillian Doyle, Luca Ialongo, Mathew Rotman & Savannah Parker

1 DETERMINE COMMUNITY NEEDS

- Consider the aspirations and strengths of the community that the program can shed light on
- Investigate community assets
- The program should reflect the values of the community

2 DEVELOP A TIMELINE

- A schedule or timeline for the design and execution process aids in organization and can help the program run smoothly
- Estimate how long each step of the operation may take so you can plan accordingly
- Timelines should include (but are not limited to)
 - Research
 - Preparation
 - Execution
 - Post production

3 STUDY SIMILAR EVENTS

- Look into how similar events have been run and what successes and challenges they faced
- Structure programs to avoid these challenges and build on their successes
- Determine what to acquire or develop before launch
 - Budgets/Fundraisers
 - Permits
 - Partnerships
 - Key stakeholders
 - Supplies

4 DESIGN A PROPOSAL

- A detailed walkthrough of the program may reveal unforeseen problems and ensure clarity of program details and expectations
- The walkthrough should cover all program aspects such as:
 - Its main goal
 - Who it is targeted for
 - How to reach your audience
 - Deadlines and days of importance: sign up, submissions, questions, payment, etc.
 - Description and guidelines for participants
 - Rules for safety or a competition
 - Eligibility if targeted at a specific group
 - If follow up is needed or it is linked to other events, make this known
 - Advertisement plan
 - Funding
 - Personnel required and their jobs

5 PREPARE FOR PROGRAM

- Promote the program to the target audience either individually, through conversation, or through social media platforms
- It is crucial that the audience is aware of, and understands, the program and goal
- Gather necessary supplies and prepare the location/platform for the event as outlined in the proposal and research

6 EXECUTE PROGRAM

- Be prepared for small hiccups by having an open mind, rather than something rigid
- Observe how the program progresses and note challenges and successes

7 POST-PROGRAM REFLECTION

- Gather feedback and make note of what happened during the events
 - What unforeseen occurrences happened? Could you have been better prepared?
 - Was it well received?
 - What could be improved upon from the administrative side? From the participants?
- Use this information to better prepare future programs

CHALLENGES

- Challenges may include
- Timeline constraints
 - Lack of community trust
 - Lack of program clarity
 - Difficulties in promotion and outreach
 - Host organization isn't fully established or identified
 - Language gap
 - Community interest levels may not translate into participation
 - Pandemic
 - Competition with other organizations' programs

RECOMMENDATIONS

- General recommendations and to address challenges:
- Devote extra time to the process
 - Make the organization's goal for the program clear
 - Promote more than you think is necessary
 - Utilize social media to advertise your program to a broader audience
 - Develop a welcoming relationship with the community to enhance your public image
 - Recruit others to help you design and carry out the program
 - Start small; a simple, easy-to-run initial program is the optimal choice

2020

CREATING A DIGITAL COMMUNITY CENTER

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

PROPOSED TO:

The Albanian Cultural Heritage Center

ORGANIZED BY:

Jill Doyle, Luca Ialongo,
Matt Rotman, Savannah Parker

WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE'S
ALBANIAN PROJECT CENTER

1. Board of Directors

Administrative structure is crucial to the success of any organization. We highly recommend a board of directors consisting of:

- **Board President**
- **Vice President**
- **Treasurer**
- **Secretary**
- **Board Members**

The first task of the board would be to develop bylaws. These will outline all major elements of the organization including a mission, how the board operates, and any other major organization actions. Subcommittees may be formed to balance the workload, given the need, enough members, and participation. Some potential subcommittees recommended are:

- Fundraising
- Marketing and PR
- Programming

2. Apply for 501-c3

The 501-c3 is a non-profit tax designation for organizations recognized by the IRS. There are 7 major steps to create a 501-c3:

1. Recruit Incorporators and Initial Directors
2. Prepare and File Articles of Incorporation
3. File an initial report
4. Obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN)
5. Store Non-Profit Records
6. Get Mass State Tax Identification Numbers/Accounts
7. Apply for 501-c3

Once a 501-c3 has been achieved, the following steps can be taken to achieve tax exemption status, obtain proper fundraising paperwork, and other necessary permits.

1. Apply for State Tax Exemption
2. Register for Fundraising
3. File to obtain other needed Permits

All steps can be viewed in detail at Harbor Compliance's website found in this QR code. This website will provide links to all necessary documentation, but it all can also be found on Massachusetts's Secretary's website under Non-Profit Corporation Forms.

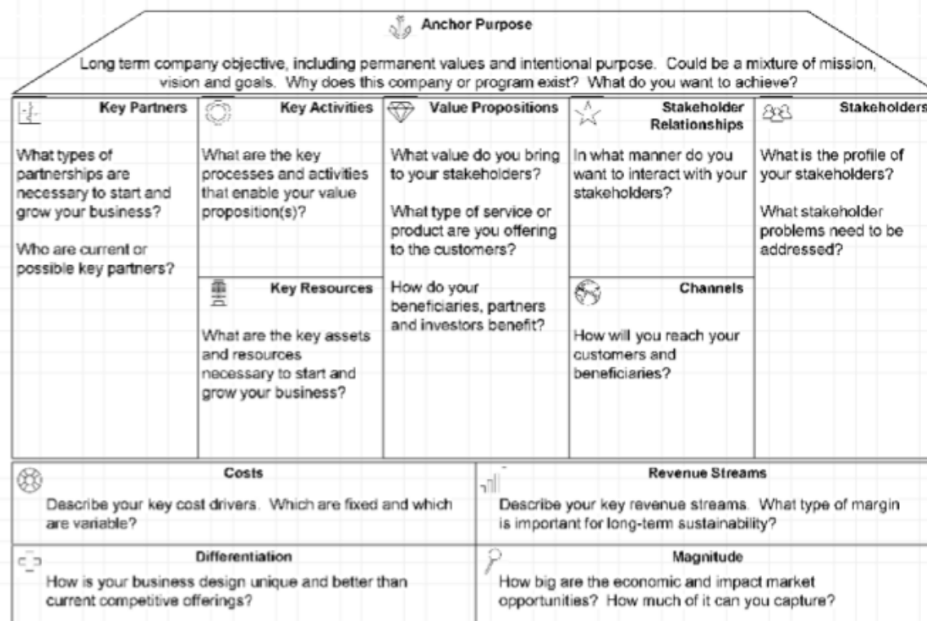


3. Envision a Community Center

Envisioning the center is the most critical step as following steps depend on a well thought-out and carefully planned design.

The model below is a Social Blueprint Business Design Framework which is useful in considering a community center.

The Social Blueprint Business Design Framework Summary

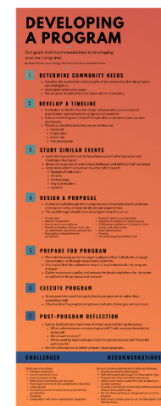


- Anchor Purpose
- Key Partners
- Key Activities
- Key Resources
- Value Proposition
- Stakeholder Relationships
- Channels
- Stakeholders
- Costs
- Revenue Streams
- Differentiation
- Magnitude

4. Develop your Programs

Your community center will need programs to provide activities, education, and benefits to your members. Once you have envisioned your center and understand the needs of your community, take these steps to develop a program:

1. Determine Needs for the Community
2. Develop a Timeline
3. Research How to Execute
4. Design A Proposal
5. Prepare for Event
6. Execute Program
7. Post-Production



The *Developing A Program* graphic we have guides you through these steps. The first 5 steps are dedicated to the development of your programs, and steps 6 & 7 are dedicated to the refinement process. Below, we list challenges and recommendations for developing and running programs:

Challenges

- Time constraints
- Lack of program clarity
- Lack of promotion and outreach
- Community interest levels do not translate into participation
- Scale of project

Recommendations:

- Set aside time
- Make the program goal and description clear
- Utilize social media to advertise to a broader audience
- Build a connection to the community
- Start small, easy to run programs are optimal

5. Managerial Structure

The Managerial structure must fully cover all the center events and activities as well as administrative tasks. The managerial structure is separate from the Board of Directors. The managerial structure covers the day-to-day tasks. We recommend:

- **Director of the Center**
- **Program Leaders**
- **Event Staff**

Along with these dedicated members, other individuals that will be needed for other functions are:

- Website Designer
- Graphic Designer
- Program Creators
- Moderators

Many of these positions can be on a volunteer basis. A paid director would be a dedicated individual leading the center. A website designer would keep the platform in peak condition, and be ready for rapid site repairs.

6. Cost Analysis

The cost analysis considers estimated expenses for a community center, the managerial salaries, and determines the start-up and upkeep costs of the center.

- Organizational expenses
- Domain and web design cost
- Day-to-day expenses
- Events/programs
- Salaries

Most costs are under \$1000. The largest cost is employment. We recommend beginning with a heavily volunteer-based structure due to its beneficial value in decreasing costs, and expanding the center's social network. Other associated costs mentioned above include:

- Zoom licensing: \$200 per year just for meeting capabilities
- Domain: \$100 initial, \$20/ year to keep
- Day-to-day expenses (far greater when physical)
- Events/programs, highly variable (can be covered by entrance fees)
- Salaries: graphic designers: \$18 per hour, program leaders: \$40- 60K/ year per person if not volunteer; can reduce if part time and minimum wage (would be less professional)
- A center's director and web designer could cost around \$150,000 total per year

7. Soft Launch

A soft launch consists of initial programs and fundraising. The main goals of a soft launch includes:

- **Refining a fundraising strategy**
- **Testing and refining various programs**
- **Assess whether your outreach is successfully building connections**

During a soft launch, an organization begins experimenting and running programs and working to gain feedback on your execution of the community center. Primary sources of feedback to focus on are:

- Participant feedback to the types of programs
- Marketing and PR
- Noting interests of potential sponsors and partnerships

Feedback ensures you are meeting the needs of your members with programs and events. Time can be spent to gain initial funding, and run test events and fundraisers.

8. Large-Scale Fundraising

This stage of fundraising is separate from the soft-launch, with the goal of funding a full-scale online community center.

Fundraising can include events within the "soft-launch". Sources for funding include:

- Developing partnerships with local businesses (donation or ad revenue)
- Seeking government funding/grants
- Individual tax-deductible donations
- Private foundation funding/grants

Consider creating a "buffer" emergency fund.

Some Worcester based organizations providing support and grants include:

- The Worcester Cultural Association
- Massachusetts Cultural Council
- Greater Worcester Community Foundation
- The Fred Harris Daniels Foundation

9. Develop a Website

Creating a helpful, navigable website is integral to attract visitors and welcome a broader audience to your organization. Your website structure should include the following pages:

- An explanation of your purpose and description of the organization and ways to contact you
- Activities calendar/calendar of events
- Photos, videos, or other visual aids to draw attention
- A public communication platform (e.g. forum)
- A home page for major announcements and short organization goal statement

In addition to the pages, the management and function components of the website are also critical to creating a successful platform. Here are some fundamental technical elements to include:

- An inventory management system to keep track of expenses and revenue
- A search engine optimization (SEO) enabling code that allows visitors to find the website through various public search engines

A successful website is an extension of your organization and serves to build public awareness. It also generates a mutual communication pathway where visitors can offer feedback on the services that your organization provides to benefit the visitors. Lastly, the access to visitor interaction data with your website will provide information about your visitor's involvement and participation.

10. Invest in your Future

A physical center could expand upon a strong online presence. You could also remain solely online and expand to a larger area within the state or a network of Albanian community centers to connect people. Consider giving back to the community through philanthropy.

Future endeavors might include:

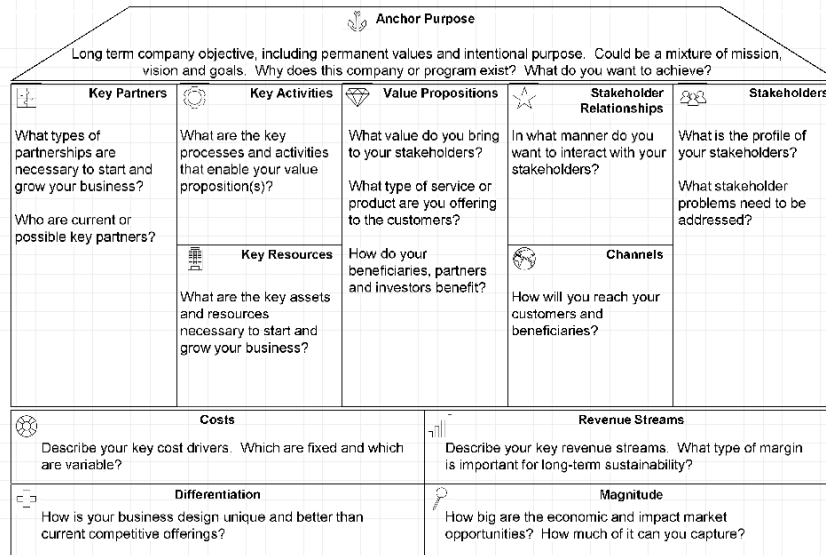
- Creating a physical space
- Expanding the online center
- Giving back (scholarship programs)

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Appendix J: Social Blueprint Business Design Framework

The Social Blueprint Business Design Framework Summary

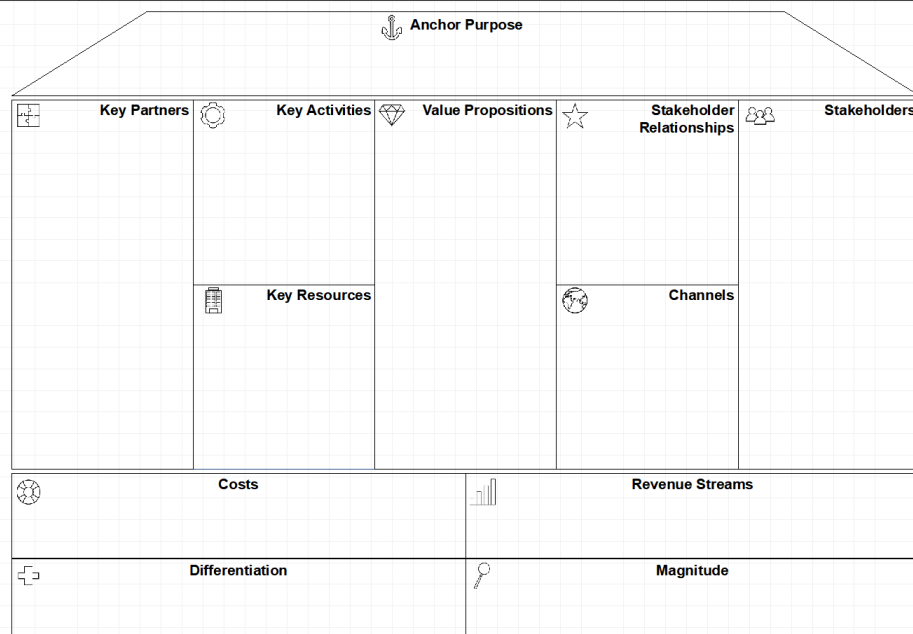


2014. Developed by Jorge Calceron, Managing Director, jorge@impactstrategyadvisors.com

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Impact Strategy Advisors

The Social Blueprint Business Design Workbook --Blanks	Project Name	<input type="text"/>	Participants	<input type="text"/>
	Version	<input type="text"/>	Date	<input type="text"/>
	Key Instruction: The Blank template is optimal for handwritten activities			

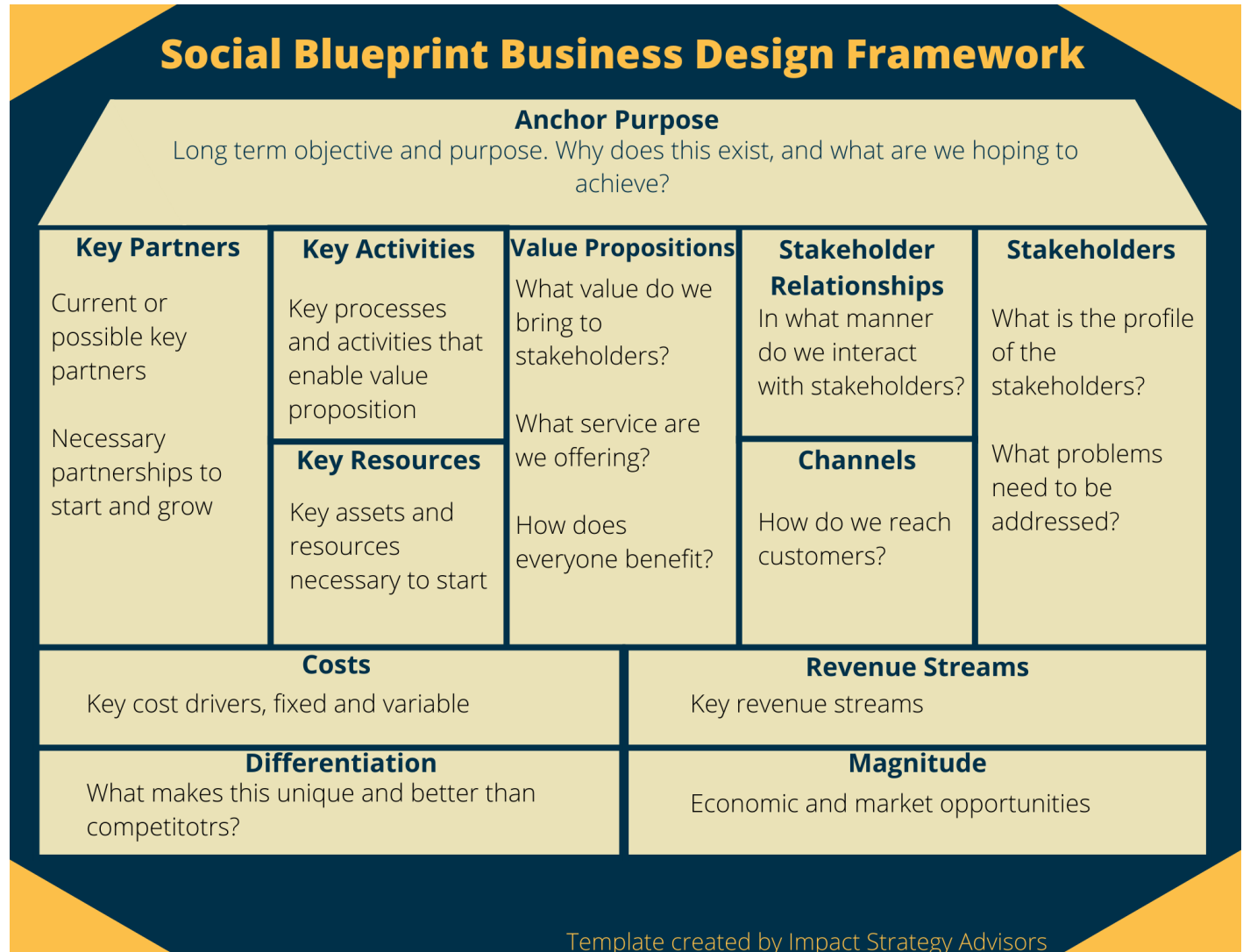


2014. Developed by Jorge Calceron, Managing Director, jorge@impactstrategyadvisors.com

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Impact Strategy Advisors

Appendix J: Social Blueprint Business Design Framework



Anchor Purpose

The main purposes are (1) to provide the Albanian community in the greater Worcester area a space to interact and congregate and (2) to promote community programs from a digital community center platform that encourages cultural learning and bridges the generations.



Value Proposition

The value propositions pertain to what we can provide to the Albanian American community. These are: a place where community members can interact and exchange ideas, the preservation and sharing of Albanian culture, and offering a database of resources to help community members, specifically new immigrants.

Key Partners

- ACHC: Tomi and Eda Stefani
- Businesses owned by Albanians
- St. Mary's Church (youth group, men's group, women's group)
- Worcester Historical Society
- Worcester Art Association
- Worcester Cultural Coalition
- MAASBESA
- Facebook groups/pages (Albanian Community of Worcester, Team Albanians, Gocat e Boston)
- WPI Albanian Project Center
- Individual talents
- Support services

Listed above are the sponsors of this project and future administrators, Tomi and Eda Stefani. Others include organizations and businesses for short term partnerships or grants, organizations and businesses that can provide long term partnerships to supplement events, and other community assets that can be utilized to help the start and continuing function of the center.

Appendix J: Social Blueprint Business Design Framework



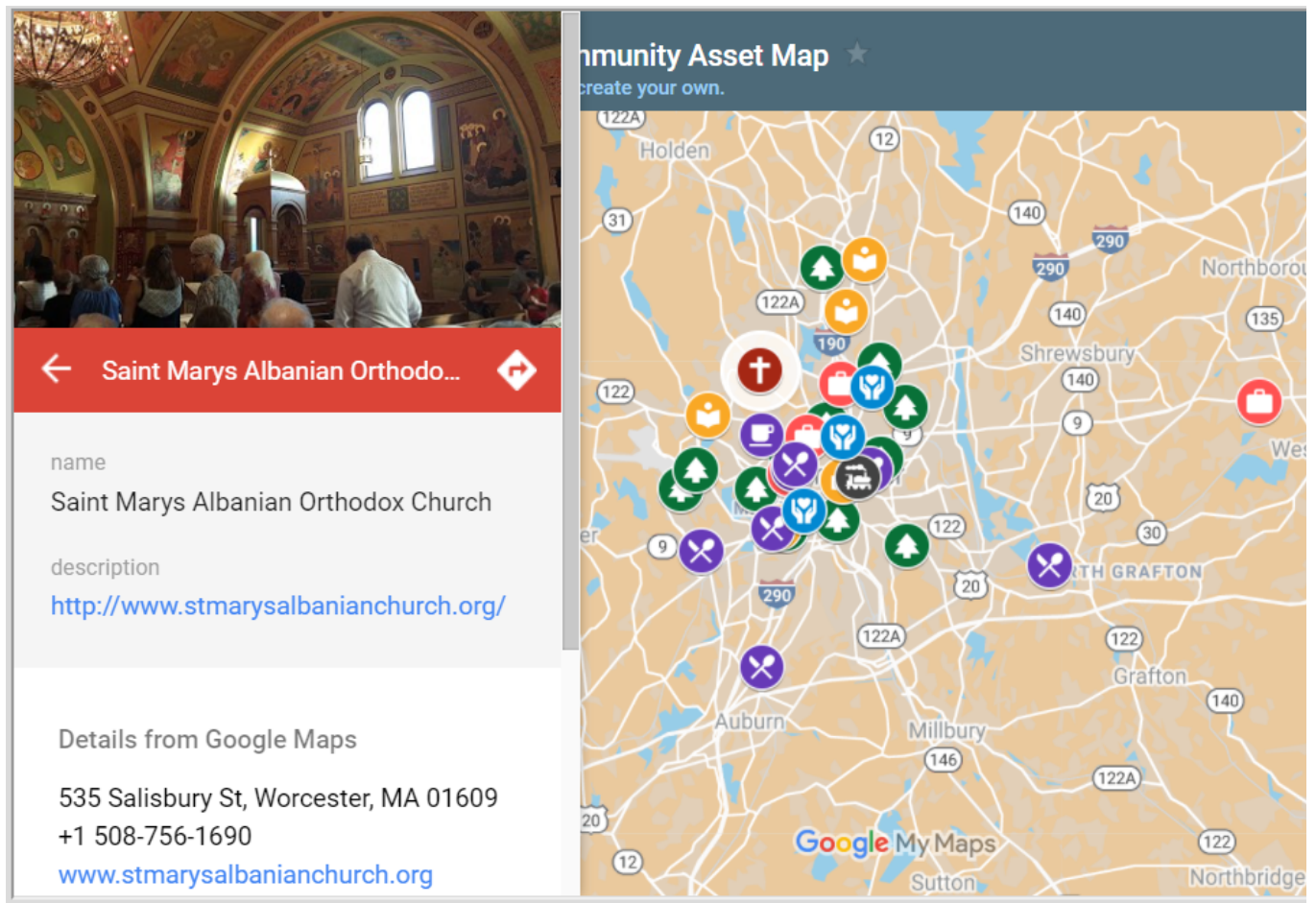
Appendix J: Social Blueprint Business Design Framework



Appendix J: Social Blueprint Business Design Framework



Appendix K: Asset Map



Appendix L: Cover Photo Credits

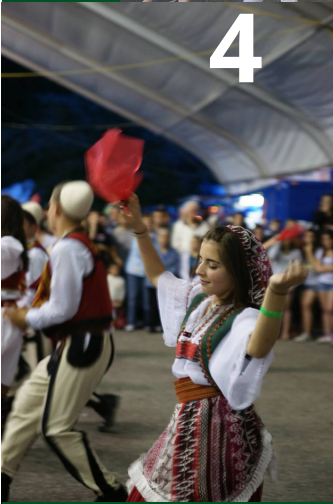


Photo 1 by: Ardian Murraj

Photo 2 by: Ardian Murraj

Photo 3 by: Edlira Stefani

Photo 4 by: Edlira Stefani

Photo 5: courtesy of Lisa Gregory