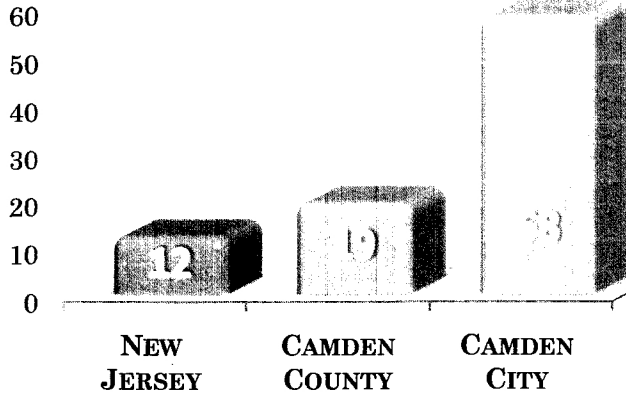


## Percentage of Children Living in Poverty

Source: The American Community Survey



Camden's troubles are deeply rooted, complex and stubbornly ingrained. Any attempt to address these problems must carefully consider the complicated nature of the city's woes and the thorny relational dynamics that continue to create and maintain disaster. Those attempting to transform this devastated city must be mission driven, motivated by love, competent and creative and patiently

committed to long term developmental solutions. They should also joyfully realize that despite disappointment, aggravation and disillusion, Camden's faithful people stand ready to bless an honest attempt at serious transformation.

## CAMDEN IN BRIEF

### Poverty

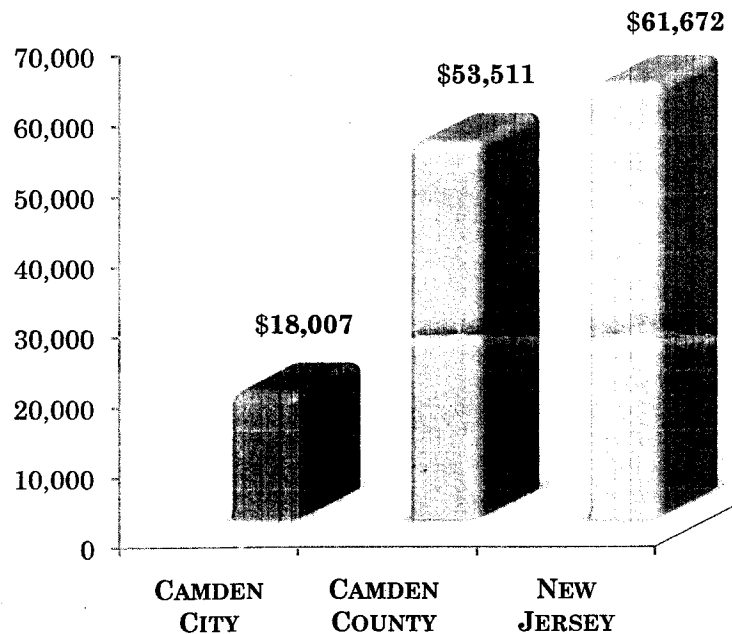
- In August 2006, the Census Bureau released data from the American Community Survey (ACS) that showed Camden was the poorest city in the country as measured by median household income and percentage of people living in poverty.

~ "Quick Facts" - CAMConnect

### Education

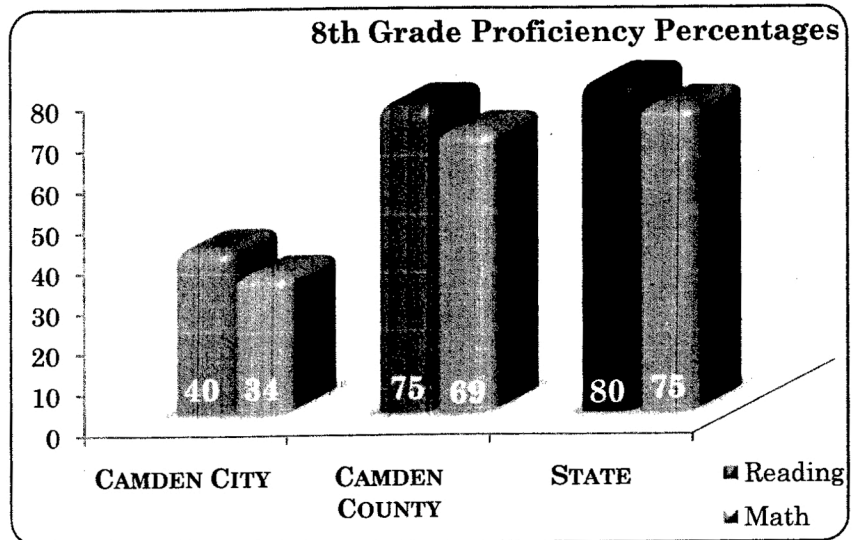
- The district does not provide mandated programs for gifted and talented students, lacks an approved plan for improving special-education activities and relies on a high-school geometry and calculus curriculum that is 17 years old, the report found. In addition, the report said, the

## Median Household Income



district does not spend federal or state grant funds as required and has no rules for addressing the deliberate falsification of annual reports on violence or vandalism. ~ *South Jersey Courier-Post*

- Despite heavy emphasis on programs at the elementary level, the performance of Camden pupils on standardized tests continues to lag behind the state as a whole. "I can't get past the third- and fourth-grade reading and math scores, which are horrible," says Lucille E. Davy, acting state commissioner of education. She stops short of saying that Camden is the worst among New Jersey districts, "but certainly in lots of measures, [Camden is] in the bottom five anywhere we look." ~ *Scholastic.com*



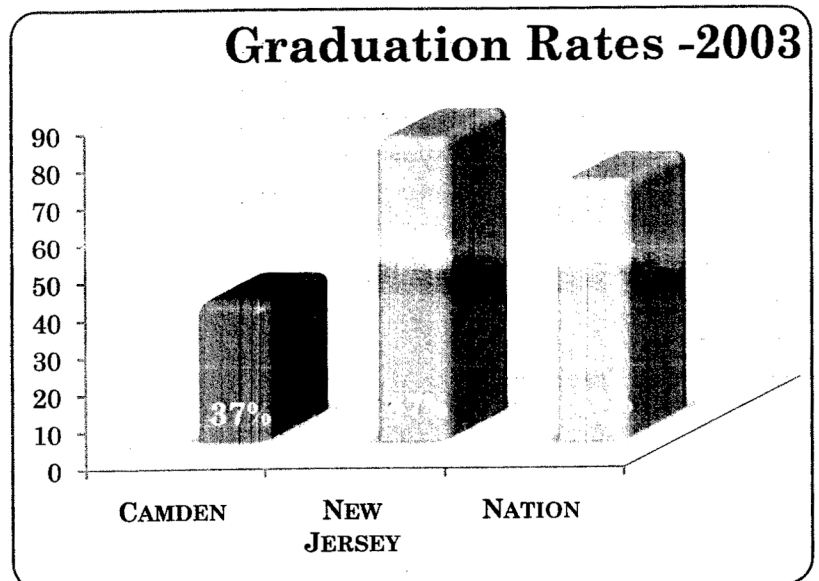
- Nationally, about 12 percent of regular and vocational high schools are considered "dropout factories." That means that 60 percent of the students who enroll as freshmen don't make it to their senior year. Camden's two regular High Schools made the list as "dropout factories." ~ *6ABC News, Philadelphia*

- Half of New Jersey's Ten Poorest Performing Elementary Schools are in Camden.**

Ranking Out of 1,375 Schools

East Camden Middle School	1,373
Powell School	1,371
U.S. Wiggins	1,370
Riletta Cream Elementary	1,369
Whittier School	1,368

~ *National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Dept of Education, and New Jersey Dept. of Education*

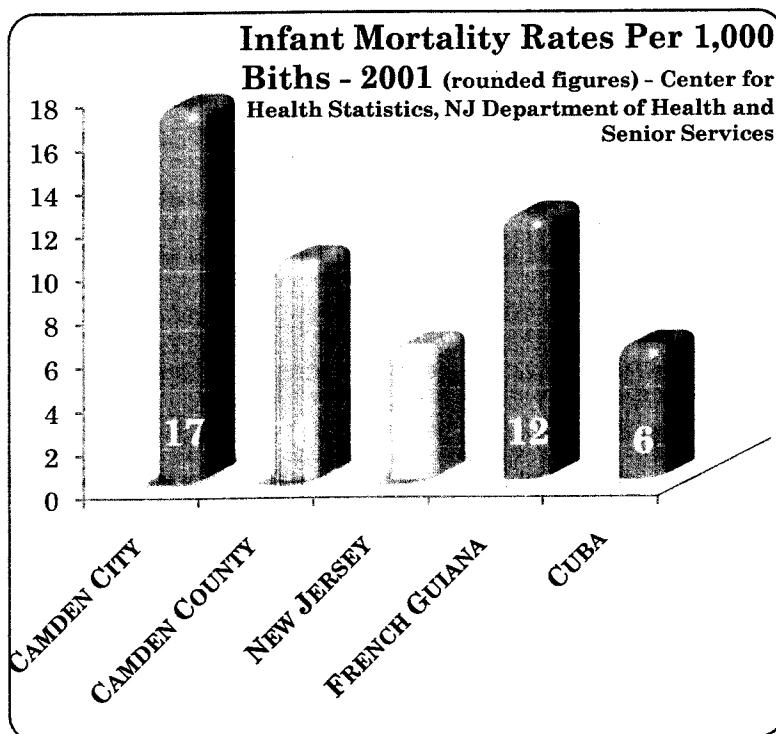


## Health

- The Health of its residents is a critical component of the overall well-being of a city. While data is limited at the city level regarding health care access and outcomes, the data available suggest disturbing trends: a high use of emergency health care services and poor child health indicators.

- Infant deaths in Camden City accounted for nearly half of all infant deaths in Camden County in 2003 and demonstrated an upward trend between 1999 and 2003. ~

Poverty in the City of Camden, New Jersey Legal Services, April 2007,



## WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

Those committed to transforming the city persistently embrace the belief that God has not abandoned Camden but has saturated its troubled streets with the waters of grace. Camden is indeed a city lying in a desperate state of disrepair. Yet, hidden among her many physical, emotional and spiritual potholes are the elements of change. Christ's compassion, mercy and continued mission of reconciliation have joined together to bring the city into a time and place swollen with promise. Within this time and place are young people with noses pressed against this window of opportunity. As the United Methodist Church stands in this opportunity space, they are organized, energized and eager to engage the process of transforming the city. Neighborhoods wait in anticipation of the wondrous benefits that emerge when people

*In a turbulent environment there are holes that offer opportunities, what we call the environmental opportunity space, a window of opportunity in terms of space and time. ~ Alex and David Bennett, Organizational Specialists*

of faith earnestly unite for the sake of God's Kingdom.

## A Youthful City

Camden's streets are fertile ground for planting and nurturing the seeds of change. It is a city full of the elements of opportunity. Chief among these elements is a large population of young people who are both eager and available for investments in encouragement, development and mission. Camden's young people are truly the city's greatest asset. Unfortunately, in tough times, many cities fail to continue investing in assets. Instead they invest the bulk of their resources in problems, of which they usually have little understanding and strategies to resolve. As Camden's situation has steadily worsened, its young people have continued to pay the price. The availability of jobs, cultural and recreational activities, and service and leadership opportunities has seriously declined. Ineffective, insufficient and dated approaches continue to pervade the landscape of youth service. The Camden Youth Ministry Initiative believes that at all times, especially in the hardest times, investment in the vital assets of young people is essential.

The Camden Youth Ministry Initiative offers the rare opportunity to freely and fully invest in solutions. This means that while we are aware of the problems, our energies and resources will continue to flow to the fundamental elements of growth and development. These elements represent the tools of change. We feel the best solution to healing the city is building a generation of talented and

