

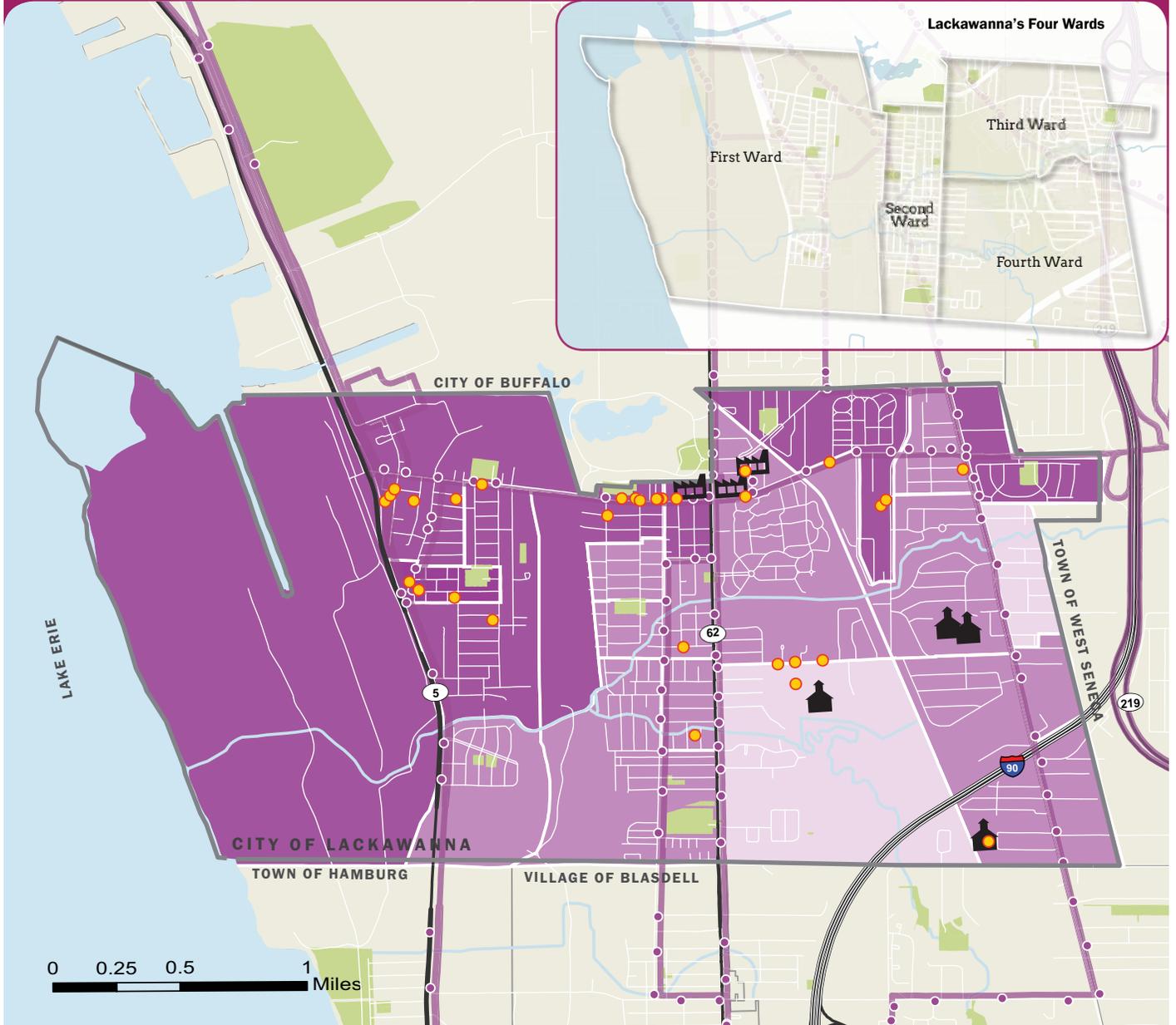
STRENGTHENING WNY's Safety Net

A COMMUNITY REPORT City of **LACKAWANNA**



Report prepared for
The John R. Oishei Foundation
by the University at Buffalo
Regional Institute

April 2014

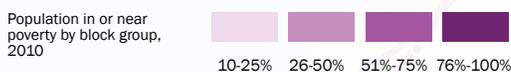


SERVICE PROVIDERS

20 service provider sites employing 2,215 employees exist in Lackawanna, providing a range of human services.

POPULATION IN OR NEAR POVERTY

About 8,030 Lackawanna residents live on incomes under or near the federal poverty level



TRANSPORTATION

NFTA BUS ROUTES & STOPS

SCHOOLS

Lackawanna City School District:
2 elementary schools
1 middle school
1 high school
about 1,900 students total

MAJOR EMPLOYERS

Baker Victory Services
Catholic Health
City of Lackawanna

About This Report

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Background

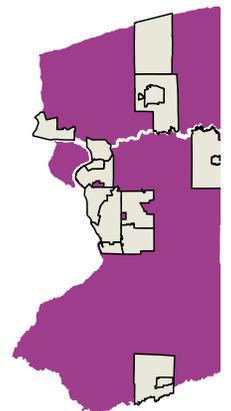
Between 2008 and 2009, regional employers shed almost 20,000 net jobs. The economic downturn, which continued into 2010, left large numbers of residents unemployed and unable to find new work for the first time in their lives. High levels of unemployment continue today. One out of 12 residents across the region seek work. For many, the situation has been long term and is now dire. As one indicator of this, Erie County Department of Social Services reports an unprecedented number of requests for emergency housing.

Families in the region's suburbs have experienced the biggest increase in poverty. One out of three with incomes below poverty live outside urban areas where support services such as emergency food, housing and employment training are concentrated. Put another way, residents may be relatively far away from the services they need to get back on their feet. They may be unaware, too, of what's out there to help them. Meanwhile, services providers are challenged to expand capacity, improve access and generate additional revenues for expanded services, while at the same time, they may be dealing with funding cuts.

To strengthen the safety net in communities where residents are struggling the most, **The John R. Oishei Foundation created the Mobile Safety-Net Team Initiative in 2009** to go into dozens of communities in Erie and Niagara Counties to assess how the downturn in the economy is impacting residents, help connect residents with the services they need, build relationships with service providers and gather information about human service needs. The team has worked in 45 communities to date.



Twelve representative communities have been selected for additional assessment and investment as part of Phase 2 of the Mobile Safety-Net Team initiative, which kicked off in 2012 and includes the team's partnership with the University at Buffalo Regional Institute. The purpose of phase two is to gather additional insights from residents, conduct focus groups, hear from organizations, and develop a tool that will assist the foundation community and communities in strengthening the safety net of services. Lackawanna is one of the 12 communities selected. The in-depth analysis and recommendations contained herein are grounded in this work of the **University at Buffalo Regional Institute** and the **Mobile Safety-Net Team**.



What Went Into This Report

Two Teams

This effort culminates months of research during 2013 and early 2014 by the University at Buffalo Regional Institute team, working in partnership with the Mobile Safety-Net Team.

University at Buffalo
Regional Institute

Mobile Safety-Net Team
an initiative of The John R. Oishei Foundation

The work of the teams
within Lackawanna over
several months...

Who We Talked to and What We Looked at

Residents and agency providers allowed us to explore how the system was currently working and gain insights into how to improve it.

Residents



Resident Survey

263 residents of Lackawanna participated in a survey, providing new data on the demographics of the city's at-risk population, their needs, urgent concerns, utilization of human services benefits, and barriers to support services.



Resident Focus Groups

Three focus groups were held with residents of Lackawanna to gather insights on their most pressing concerns, barriers to accessing services and insights on how the system might be improved for them.

Agencies



Agency Interviews

Dozens of human service agency representatives shared information on their programs and perspectives on opportunities.



Agency Focus Groups

Seventeen provider representatives and leaders in Lackawanna took part in an a conversation conducted at the Lackawanna Library in December 2013 to gather agency perspectives on human services needs, barriers and strategies for improving the landscape of services.

Secondary Data



Data Sources

Information and insights were gathered from diverse sources, including the 2010 Census, 2007-2011 American Community Survey, Social Explorer Reports, NYS Department of Health, NYS Education Department 2012 School Report Card, NYS Division of Criminal Justice Statistics and Reference USA.

Understanding the Report

The months of information gathering provided the structure for understanding the needs, the barriers and the strategies for improving the current system.

...led us to explore...

...which resulted in:

People



Places



Services



Insights &
Recommendations



STRENGTHENING WNY's Safety Net

A COMMUNITY REPORT City of **LACKAWANNA**



A large population in poverty or close to it...

Among Lackawanna's population of 18,170...

...nearly

3,635

Lackawanna residents live on incomes under the federal poverty level.

...an additional

4,395

are close to poverty, with incomes between 100%-200% of the poverty level.

...about

8,030

are doing poorly or struggling financially. This is 44% of the total.

Beyond poverty, other alarming indicators and trends...

Work is scarce for Lackawanna's vulnerable. Just 24% of non-retired adults report working full time. Moreover, need has been on the rise. Lackawanna's population declined 5% since 2000, while the number living in or near poverty increased 14%.

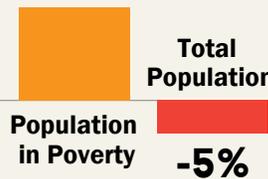
24%

of non-retired vulnerable adults work full time

No major grocers exist in Lackawanna. While corner stores and pantries are present, these are expensive and/or do not carry a selection of fresh food. As a result, areas of the city are designated as food deserts.

Poverty is growing as population is shrinking

14%



50% of families in poverty are single mothers, and providers say **parents are difficult to engage, with few turning out for PTA meetings or school events.**

No major grocers

One out of 10 residents in Lackawanna is foreign born. At Martin Road Elementary, 15 different languages are spoken.

Juvenile arrests have increased 56% since 2008, an indicator of the few options that exist for at-risk youth to cultivate talents and skills outside of school.

58% of urgent concerns are **housing related**

Half of renters are cost burdened. Even those who rent from the Municipal Housing Authority are struggling, with **about one-third taken to court in any given month for non-payment of rent.**

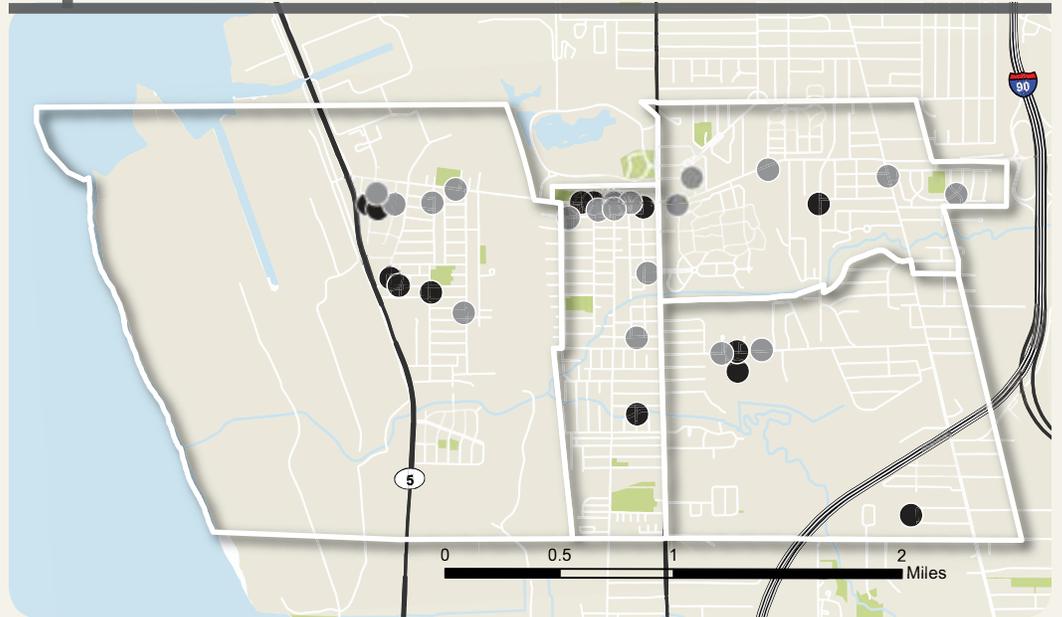
Poor school performance contributes to low educational attainment levels of residents. Lackawanna is one of the 10 lowest performing public school districts in Upstate New York. Over the past 3 years, nearly 150 students have dropped out. The current drop-out rate stands at nearly 10%.

* Findings come from a survey of 263 at-risk residents in Lackawanna, reflecting a statistically significant sample size at a confidence level of 95% and with a confidence interval of 6.

**Lackawanna's
landscape
of human
services
providers...**

20 public and private providers **employ** about **2,215**

exist in Lackawanna to provide a range of human services to residents, including food, health, education, supports for at-risk youth and more.



strengths

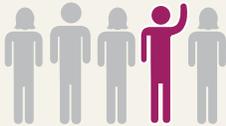
Strengths include the library, which is a community hub; a Parent/Family Resource Center within the school district; a community center for Arab Americans; Catholic Health's all-inclusive LIFE program for seniors; an affordable community for homeowners; infrastructure to support business development; the success of Community Fun Days; and positive recent developments (new block clubs and city youth programs in the schools).

gaps

Gaps in services exist for grocery stores and affordable food; specialty health services; after-school programs for youth, especially for youth whose families don't have a car; affordable and flexible transportation, especially for First Ward residents; and effective information channels, both among providers and between schools and parents.

Barriers and systemic challenges...

1 out of 5 residents surveyed in Lackawanna say they have encountered difficulty getting services.



After-school programming is largely lacking, especially for public school children whose families don't have a car. Due to funding, Lackawanna City School District has cut almost all after-school programs. While open gym is available through a recent collaboration with the city, more structured programs aren't available, and the city lacks any kind of community center or Boys & Girls Club. While private and charter schools have activities, there is no collaboration with the public schools.

1,436

Households without access to a vehicle

One in five households lack a vehicle. Many live in the First Ward, where poverty is concentrated and where public transportation options are very limited, especially on weekends and evenings. Residents say there are no practical options for even getting to a grocery store on the weekend.

The First Ward, where poverty is deepest, is isolated geographically, separated by the railroad and overpass bridge from the rest of the city. Providers describe a stigma associated with this area and intentional isolation. For instance, one provider describes the difficulty seniors in the First Ward have booking the senior center van and how the Senior Center in the Fourth Ward attracts mostly whites, even though poverty is greatest among Lackawanna's nonwhite population.

56% of adults have no education beyond high school

Over half of adults have no education or training beyond high school, creating barriers to services and jobs paying a living wage. Fueling this is Lackawanna City School District's performance; it's the 8th lowest performing district in the state, outside of NYC. While Global Concepts Charter School in Lackawanna ranks higher, in the top half of elementary schools in the region, enrollment in this K through 12 school is limited by capacity to about 750 students.

High business taxes limit business and job development that would lift residents out of poverty. Providers say commercial taxes are higher than in surrounding communities, a vestige of the days when Bethlehem Steel was the city's major employer and tax revenue contributor. While homeowners pay comparably lower rates (the non-homestead rate is about 2.5 times the homestead rate), the overall tax rate in Lackawanna is higher than in any other municipality in Erie County outside the Town of Tonawanda.

Providers report tension between the city and its nonprofit community, stemming from the fact that their operations are not taxed and do not generate revenue for the city. This is on top of a history of political tension that has only recently begun to improve, that has immobilized new projects in the past based on lack of agreement. Symbolic of this is the debate over what will take the place of the former Friendship House in the First Ward.

There is a growing sense of hopelessness, rooted in generational poverty and barriers that keep individuals entrenched in poverty such as the lack of nearby jobs and transportation barriers. Further fueling apathy is Lackawanna's standing against neighboring Buffalo, which is over 10 times the size, deeper in poverty, and where much new economic development funding is being targeted. Agency leaders express a need for more community leaders who can instill hope and advocate for residents of Lackawanna.

Information channels are weak and not always effective, especially those connecting public schools and parents. School representatives say the high school has stopped sending home flyers with students, believing the information doesn't reach parents. Suggestive of this is parents' lack of attendance at PTA meetings or other events intended to engage them.

1 out of 10 residents is foreign born

Lack of awareness and sensitivity to cultural differences may give rise to misconceptions and barriers to information and services for Lackawanna's Yemenite population. In many Arab cultures, for instance, interaction between genders is limited outside the family unit. This cultural norm may create access barriers to programs and services, in the absence of culturally sensitive program delivery.

Recommendations to strengthen the safety net of human services...

RECOMMENDATION	STRATEGIES	MODEL TO CONSIDER
Building on synergy, create a coalition of human services providers to strengthen partnerships and information channels	<p>Convene a summit of human services providers</p> <p>Build a coalition of governmental, not-for-profit and faith-based stakeholders to strengthen information channels and expand partnerships. The Human Services Coalition of the Tonawandas is a local model to consider.</p> <p>Create a listserv to facilitate communication among providers on topics of interest</p> <p>Explore school-community-parent partnerships for more effective information dissemination to parents</p>	<p>In March 2013, a first-ever poverty conference at Niagara University convened over 125 human services providers to problem solve and mobilize the provider community.</p> <p>http://news.niagara.edu/niagara-university-hosts-conference-on-poverty-and-homelessness/</p>
Encourage business investment and innovation to grow the number of jobs	<p>Support the Lackawanna Area Chamber of Commerce in advocating for changes to propel economic development</p> <p>Explore options that would give Lackawanna more flexibility to impose differential tax rates for different classes of property</p> <p>Tap into funding available through WNY's Regional Economic Development Council (REDC)</p>	<p>The Elmwood Village Business Association has been a critical resource in revitalizing a neighborhood that decades ago was known for crime, vacant store fronts and devalued housing.</p> <p>http://www.elmwoodvillage.org/</p>
Increase the availability of enriching out-of-school activities for youth	<p>Explore options for public-private school collaboration, facilitated, perhaps, through incentive grants</p> <p>Continue to strengthen the public library's capacity as an after-school hub</p> <p>Develop a YES (Youth Engaged in Service) Program</p> <p>Explore partnerships with the Lackawanna Housing Authority to create opportunities for youth</p>	<p>Through over 100 partnering organizations, the Niagara Falls Housing Authority offers at-risk youth a myriad of out-of-school options from tutoring to career counseling, a youth choir, kids cafe and scholarships.</p> <p>http://nfha.org/what-we-do/for-kids-youth/</p>
Expand opportunities for vocational training	<p>Strengthen the pipeline for careers in advanced manufacturing within the Lackawanna School District</p> <p>Increase awareness of and accessibility to training for high demand careers in health care</p>	<p>Dream It. Do It. is a growing national initiative being implemented regionally to promote careers in advanced manufacturing.</p> <p>http://www.didiwny.com/</p>
Expand supports for affordable and flexible transportation	<p>Explore the possibility of developing a local More Than Wheels Program, or taking advantage of the many churches in Lackawanna, a local site for Hearts and Hands Faith in Action</p> <p>Increase information and awareness among seniors in the First Ward of requirements for using the senior van</p>	<p>More than Wheels breaks the cycle of poverty by raising financial literacy and making it possible for families to own a car.</p> <p>http://www.bonnieclac.org/</p>
Strengthen supports for food and health promotion	<p>Partner with farmers to bring farmers markets to the First Ward, and expand community gardens</p> <p>Tap into expertise of Massachusetts Avenue Project and Grassroots Gardens to strengthen network for food</p>	<p>The Massachusetts Avenue Project on Buffalo's West Side is increasing fresh and affordable food for low-income families.</p> <p>http://mass-ave.org/</p>
Mobilize residents to advance change and instill hope	<p>Partner with PUSH Buffalo</p> <p>Send resident representatives to the free Citizen Planning School taking place as part of One Region Forward</p> <p>Cultivate leaders through programs such as Leadership Buffalo and the United Way's Young Leaders Society</p>	<p>Community organizing for the benefit of neighborhoods and Buffalo's West Side is at the core of PUSH Buffalo, an organization that was recently awarded \$3.5 million for its housing work.</p> <p>http://pushbuffalo.org/</p>

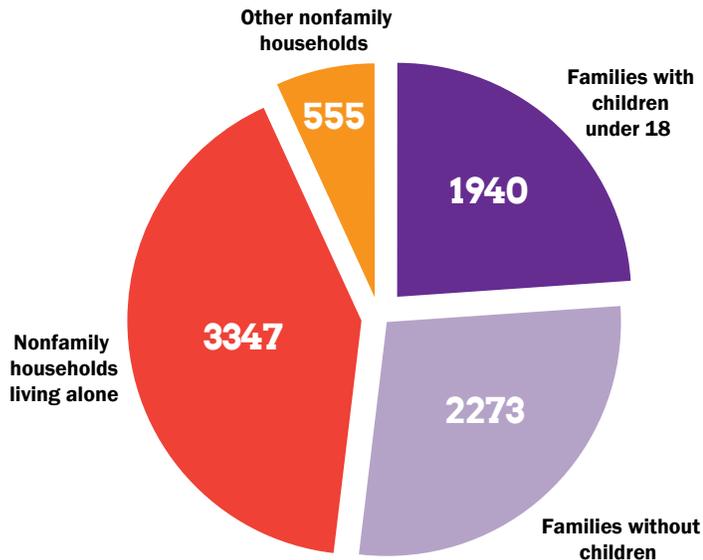
Context for Action

People in Need

Individuals
and families of
Lackawanna,
where we work,
how much we
earn and where
we go to school

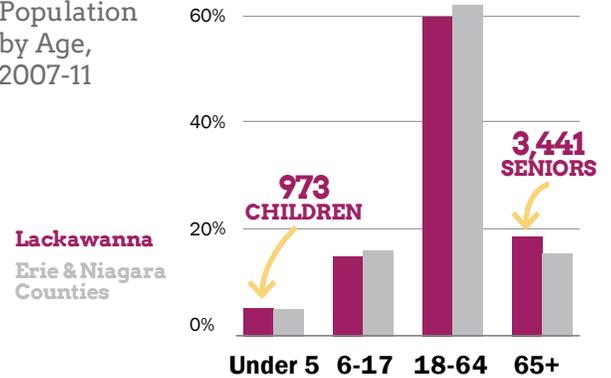


Households by Type, 2007-11



Source: 2007-2011 American Community Survey

Population by Age, 2007-11



Potentially At-Risk Populations, 2007-11

Adults with a HS diploma or less	6,975
Non-white Individuals	2,630
Foreign born Individuals	1,771
Veterans	1,313
Single parents	999

Source: 2007-2011 American Community Survey

Individuals and Families

Approximately 18,170 individuals live in the City of Lackawanna. This figure represents a 12% decrease in the city's population over the last 20 years. Over half the population is between the ages of 18 to 64, and 19% is 65 years or older, which is at or past the age of retirement. One in ten are older seniors, age 75 or more, an age where demand for services and support tends to increase.

With an average of 2.4 people per household, households in Lackawanna tend to be small, but not much larger than they generally are throughout Erie County (2.3). Households with children under the age of 18 are a minority, comprising only a quarter (24%) of all households in Lackawanna, a percentage that is lower than across Erie County where proportionally more households have children of school age or younger.

Population, 1990-2010

-12%
Lackawanna's population decrease over the past 20 years

Source: 1990 and 2010 Census

About 28% of households in Lackawanna are families without younger children, and 41% are households in which individuals live by themselves. Non-family households such as these account for a larger proportion than across Erie County, suggestive of Lackawanna's older population.

Aside from young children and seniors, who are sometimes economically vulnerable because of age-related work barriers, adults with a high school degree or less are another group of concern. In Lackawanna, there are 6,975 individuals (or 56% of the population 25 years or older) with a high school degree or less who, as a result of their limited educational level, may lack access to higher paying jobs and are thus more likely to be struggling economically.

Source: 2007-2011 American Community Survey

56%
of adults 25 years or older have a high school degree or less

Employment by Sector, 2007-2011

	City of Lackawanna	Erie County
Private, for-profit	71%	66%
Public sector	15%	17%
Private, non-profit	10%	10%
Self-employed/unpaid family	3%	7%

Source: 2007-2011 American Community Survey

Lackawanna's Top 10 Employers

Employer	# of Employees
Baker Victory Services	1,200
Catholic Health	300
City of Lackawanna	244
Lackawanna City School District	210
Cobey Inc.	100
Great Lakes MDF	100
HazMat Environmental Group, Inc.	100
Iroquois Bar Corp.	99
Lackawanna Municipal Housing	90
Monarch Little Learners Academy	80

Source: Reference USA and other sources. See Appendix A Data Sources and Notes, pages 36 and 37.

Work and Income

In 2011, a total of 3,606 workers were employed in Lackawanna, where economic activities today revolve mainly around educational services, manufacturing, and accommodation and food services. Among the top employers are several faith-based health care and social assistance institutions such as Baker Victory Services, which provides over one thousand jobs plus hundreds more through its allied organizations. Public employers in this list include the Lackawanna City School District, the Lackawanna Public Safety Department, and Lackawanna Municipal Housing Authority, which provide hundreds of jobs altogether. Also among the top ten employers are two manufacturing companies that cater to the energy and the engineered wood products industries.

Yet only 755 of these workers were also city residents; over 6,500 workers residing in Lackawanna (90% of working residents) are employed elsewhere in the region. This massive outflow of workers may have been the result of the decline in manufacturing jobs over the last decade. Whereas 17% of residents were employed in manufacturing in 2009, in 2011 the proportion of residents working in manufacturing was 12%. Those who were unable to stay employed in manufacturing may have shifted to jobs in other industries. Today, approximately 24% of working residents are employed in the educational, health care, and social assistance services industry (up from 19% in 2009), and another 16% are employed in retail. Many are occupied in office and administrative

positions (17%), in professional positions (15%), and in sales (14%). Slightly less than three quarters of resident workers are employed in the private sector, while 15% are employed in the public sector and 10% in the private non-profit sector.

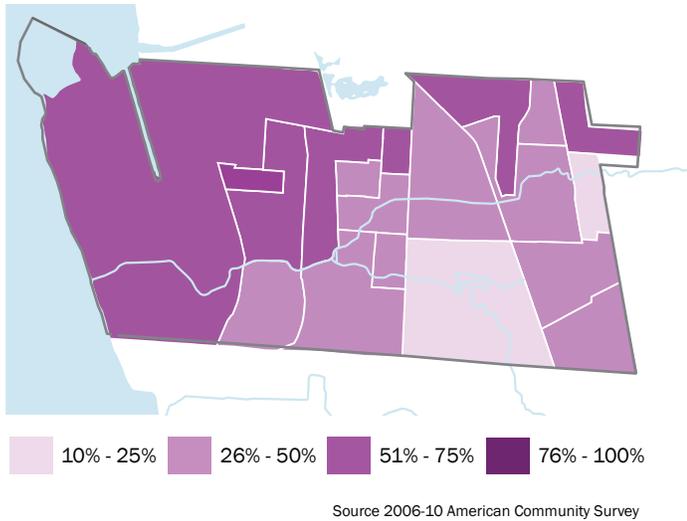
% Households by Income Levels

	City of Lackawanna	Erie County
\$0 - \$25K	37%	26%
\$25K - \$100K	55%	55%
\$100K+	8%	19%

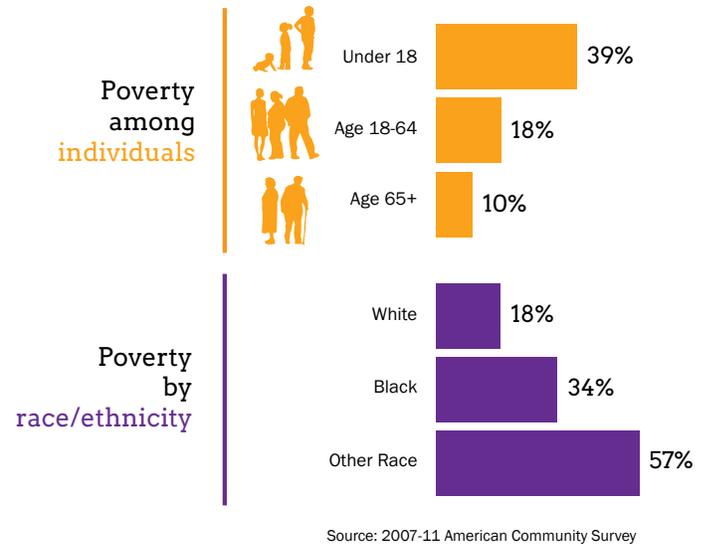
Source: 2007-2011 American Community Survey

The average income of Lackawanna residents is \$27,366; the median household income is \$35,913. Better paying jobs are not necessarily available outside the city: 39% of residents working in Lackawanna and nearly 30% of residents working elsewhere earn less than \$1,250 per month. For residents earning between \$1,251 and \$3,333 per month, 30% live and work in the city and 43% live in the city but work elsewhere.

Population in or near poverty, 2010



Population in Poverty by Age and Race/Ethnicity, 2007-2011



Poverty

In Lackawanna, there are 3,635 individuals living in poverty and another 4,397 individuals managing on incomes between 100% and 200% of the federal poverty level. Altogether, nearly 45% of the population is considered to be poor or struggling. In terms of families, about 16% are in poverty.

Yet not everyone in Lackawanna is affected equally by poverty. Across age groups, children are most impacted, with four out of ten living in poverty, a proportion that is double the rate of poverty among working age adults and quadruple that for seniors.

That said, the group with the largest number of individuals in poverty is adults between the ages of 18 to 64, which accounts for 53% of individuals living in poverty. Of families in poverty (680), 51% are those of single mothers and 21% are of married couples with children. However, poverty tends to be much more of a problem among single parents: 50% of families with single mothers and 38% of families with single fathers live in poverty while only 16% of families with married couples with children live in poverty.

In terms of race, the group with the greatest number of individuals living in poverty is White (2,761 or 76% of all individuals living in poverty). However, although non-whites account for only 24% of the population living in poverty, 33% of all non-whites in Lackawanna live in poverty, which means that poverty tends to be more of a problem among non-whites than among whites.

\$18.07 Amount a family of three lives on, per person per day, at the federal poverty level

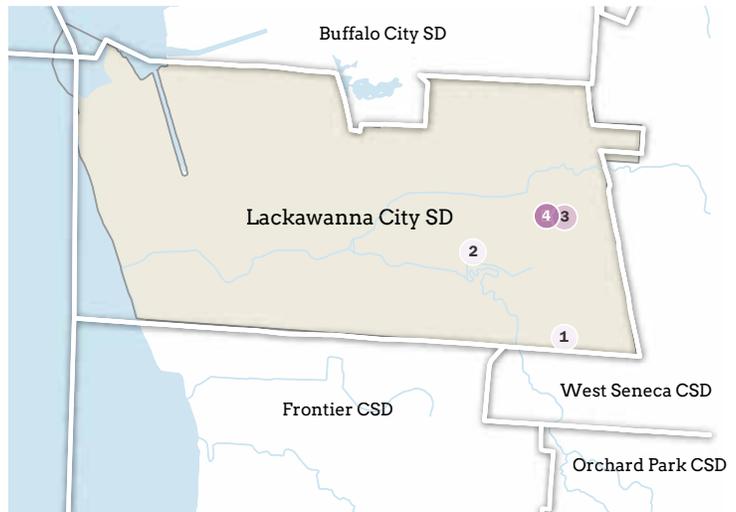
\$12.00 Cost of a round trip by bus without transfers for a family of three

\$20.00 Daily cost of owning and operating a car

Source: 2014 HHS Poverty Guidelines and Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority standard fares; and Edmunds.com

	Schools in Lackawanna City School District	Enrollment, 2011	% Qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch
ELEMENTARY			
1	Truman Elementary School (Pre-K to 2)	498	90%
2	Martin Road Elementary School (3-6)	528	82%
MIDDLE			
3	Lackawanna Middle School (7-8)	233	91%
HIGH			
4	Lackawanna High School (9-12)	587	83%

Source: NYS School Report Card SY 2011-2012



Source: NYS Education Department 2011 School Report Card and NYS GIS Clearinghouse

Education

The Lackawanna City School District contains two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Altogether they enroll 1,910 students. More than four fifths of the students qualify for free or reduced price lunch.

In 2012, children in the Lackawanna City School District performed worse than other children in the region and the state in both English Language Arts (ELA) and Math. Only 41% and 45% of students met fourth grade ELA and math standards respectively; and only 33% and 38% of students met eighth grade ELA and math standards respectively.

Performance is also lower among the district's economically disadvantaged students: 62% of economically disadvantaged students failed to meet ELA standards and 58% failed to meet math standards. In contrast, among students that are better off economically, only 27% failed to meet fourth grade ELA and 33% failed to meet fourth grade math standards. The situation is similar in the eighth grade: while 70% of economically disadvantaged students fail to meet ELA standards, only 47% of students that are better off do not meet ELA standards; and in math, 66% of economically disadvantaged students don't meet the standards, while only 41% of students economically better off students fail to meet the standards.

At 74%, the high school graduation rate in Lackawanna is lower than it is throughout the region (88%) and across New York State (86%). However, among students who do graduate from high school, 92% have plans to complete some level of post-secondary education. This interest in post-secondary studies contrasts dramatically with the educational attainment achieved by the majority of adults in Lackawanna. Indeed, only 17% of adults 25 years or older had a bachelor's degree or higher in 2007-2011.

Educational Attainment of Adults Age 25+, 2007-11

	City of Lackawanna	Erie County
Less than High School	20%	12%
High School	36%	31%
Some College/Associate's Degree	27%	30%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	17%	27%

Source: 2007-11 American Community Survey

Lackawanna's economic woes clearly play a role in its students' academic performance, but it may not be the only factor. **Global Concepts Charter School, located on Ridge Road, reports better academic performance, even though a large proportion (76%) of its 750 students are economically disadvantaged, qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch.** At the fourth grade level, for instance, more than 80% of economically disadvantaged students meet ELA and math standards. At the eighth grade level, more than 50% of economically disadvantaged students meet ELA and math standards. Even students who are better off financially report better performance than their public school counterparts. Family factors may contribute to these differences, as children enrolled at Global Concepts Charter School have parents who sought out this opportunity for their child and successfully navigated the school's application process, requirements and deadlines.

Context for Action

Lackawanna's Most Vulnerable



Demographics,
service usage,
urgent needs
and barriers

Assessing the Need

263 Lackawanna residents responded to the Mobile Safety-Net Team Community Needs Assessment.

This one-page questionnaire gathered data and information on demographics, urgent needs, concerns and barriers experienced by residents in getting human services.

Assessments were completed at a variety of sites including Catholic Charities - Lackawanna Food Pantry, Lackawanna Public Library, Monarch Little Learners Center, Lackawanna Senior Center, Second Baptist Church, Lackawanna Municipal Housing Authority, Truman Elementary, Martin Road Elementary, ACCESS, Lackawanna Islamic Mosque and Bethel Presbyterian Church Dinner.

What human services are residents receiving?

Two-thirds of those surveyed at a variety of sites and venues across Lackawanna report receiving some form of human services support or living in a household with someone who does.

The most common types of benefits reported by those who receive support

Food Stamps	75%
Medicaid Insurance	75%
HEAP	31%
Rental Assistance	27%
SSI/SSD	27%

67%

of those receiving some form of public assistance qualify for and receive more than one kind of benefit.

Pending applications. In addition, 8% of those not receiving any benefit at this time say they have an application for public assistance pending. The majority of pending applications are for HEAP and food stamps.

Are there indicators of greater need?

The need for support with food, health insurance, housing costs and cash assistance is probably greater than indicated by the current number of recipients. Both those receiving benefits as well as those who don't report having experienced access barriers. Altogether, 21% say they have encountered difficulty getting services. Income limits and travel difficulties are among the most frequently reported barriers.

13%

of survey takers report having an urgent concern.

The most urgent concerns of those surveyed

Utility Shut-Off/ No Money for Food	10%
Foreclosure or Eviction	5%

Urgent Concerns: The large majority of residents surveyed didn't identify any urgent concerns. Only about one out of ten survey takers (13% of the total) reported having an urgent concern. Yet these desperate needs are reported by both those receiving services as

well as those who don't. This suggests that current levels of support that residents and their families are connecting with are not sufficient.

Lack of Health Insurance.

About one in ten reported that at least one person in their household lacks health insurance. For every survey taker who said there is an uninsured child in their home, about 3 said there was at least one uninsured adult.

What's causing this situation?

A confluence of factors are at play in the lives of Lackawanna residents who are in need of services or at risk, including factors affecting their capacity to work and be self-sufficient as well as factors that weigh heavily on the needs of individuals and families.

The most pressing identified by the survey include:

Unemployment/Underemployment. While 78% of those surveyed are in their working prime between the ages of 18 and 64, only 20% reported working full time. The others are unemployed (20%), disabled (16%), retired (17%), working part-time (16%), a student (6%) or in another situation (5%). Compounding matters is that only 18% said that other adults in their household are employed full time.

Low income. Slightly more than half of those who reported their income on the survey said their household has less than \$1,250 a month to live on. This is less than the

263 surveyed

poverty level for a household of two, the median household size for those surveyed.

Limited education and skills. Only 22% of those surveyed say they have completed at least a two-year degree or trade school, even though most jobs in today's economy that pay a living wage require a college degree or vocational skills.

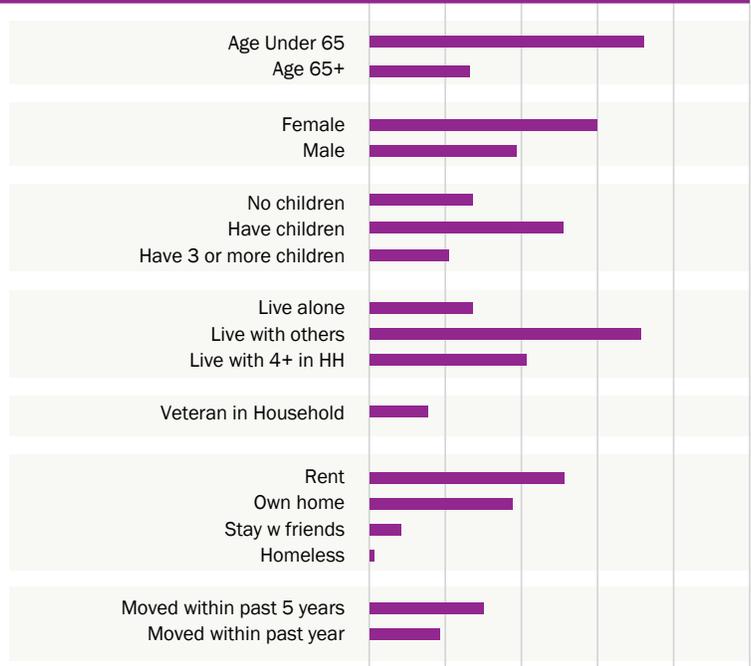
Transportation. 42% report they depend on a mode of travel other than a vehicle they own. Riding public transit and walking/biking were most commonly reported, options that tend to limit the radius residents can travel for work, education and to connect with human services. Among the issues said to be a barrier to using public transit more often are cost (too expensive), frequency of service (not frequent enough), and duration of trip (takes too long to get places).

Is there evidence of persistent poverty?

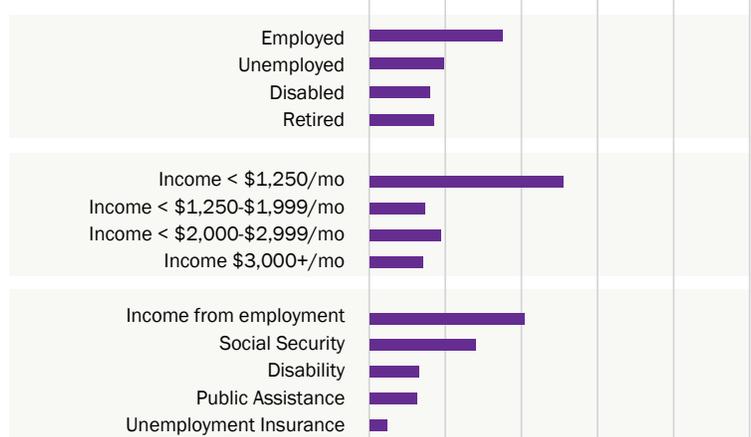
Asset poverty. Three out of ten survey takers own their home, suggesting that the large majority of those now struggling either lost a home due to financial conditions or were never in a position to purchase one. Nearly one out of three are also without a car.

Expired unemployment insurance. 35% of survey takers say either they or an adult in their household is unemployed. Yet, only 5% receive unemployment insurance as one of their income sources, suggesting their unemployment is long-term and has extended past the eligibility period for benefits.

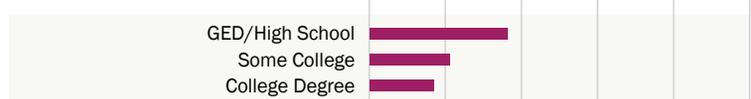
Individuals and Families



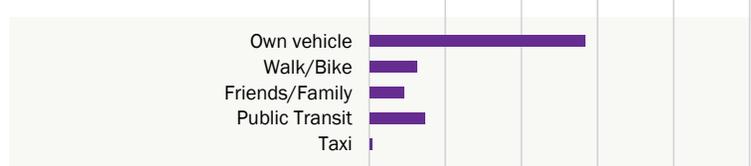
Work and Income



Education



Transportation



Source: Mobile Safety-Net Team Community Needs Assessment, 2013

Barriers Residents Face

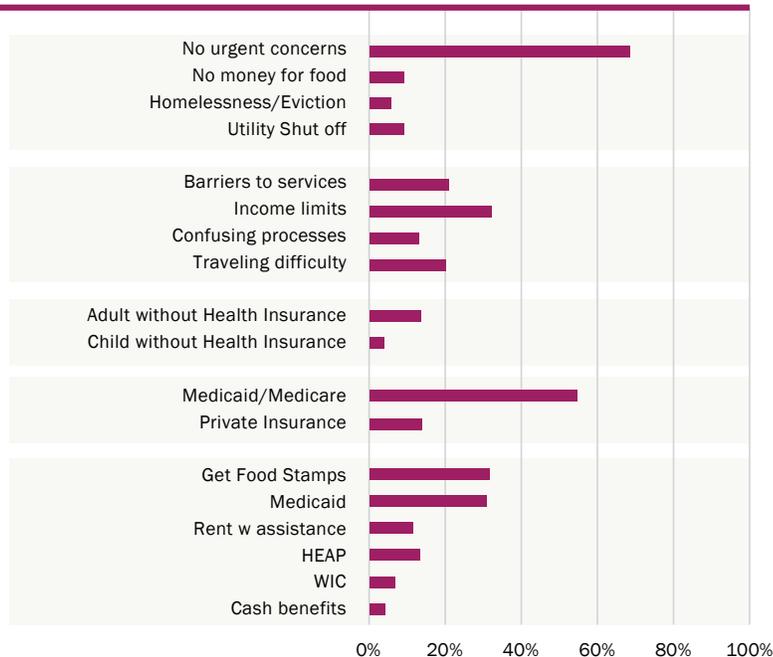
One out of five residents reports encountering barriers to the program and services they and their families need. Being turned away because of income limits was the most frequently reported kind of obstacle, encountered by 10% of those surveyed. Traveling difficulties were the second most common, affecting 6%. Fewer reported trouble accessing programs and services due to confusing processes (4%), physical difficulty leaving home (3%), language barriers (2%) or being unable to get to an agency during their normal business hours (2%).

An analysis of the 81 surveys completed by Lackawanna's Yemenite population (out of the total survey pool of 263) reveals these families are equally likely to experience barriers, with income limits posing the most common obstacle.

Conversations with residents at Lackawanna Public Library, the Senior Citizens Center and Second Baptist Church shed light on these and other barriers vulnerable residents face.

Transportation: Except at the senior center where some described the senior van as "great," a common thread running through the other two groups was the difficulty in relying on public transportation and other options for getting to jobs, health care, shopping and DSS: buses that don't run in the evening on Saturday or Sundays; no easy way to get to the Galleria; the need to walk over the bridge to catch the No. 16 bus; unshoveled sidewalks; dangerous crossings and a lack of pedestrian safety on Ridge Road, and the lack of any

Needs & Barriers



Source: Mobile Safety-Net Team Community Needs Assessment, 2013

representation from Lackawanna on NFTA's advisory board, while routes have been cut.

A Voice from the Community

At Second Baptist in the First Ward seniors

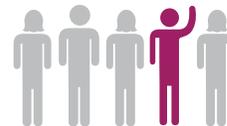
were not as positive as those at the senior center about the senior van. One said the van won't come here; another said you need to catch the van over the bridge; while a third observed that there simply may not be enough vans to meet demand and how some may not be able to accept how the van needs to be reserved three days in advance.

Senior Needs: The need for more information, particularly about weatherization and housing supports such as STAR was a key

need voiced by the group at the senior center. A newsletter to every house would help. Outside the center, seniors said they could use more "good Samaritans" to help with snow shoveling.

Out-of-school options for youth: Consensus exists that options for youth have declined, especially since the closing of the Friendship House. Located in the First Ward, this resource kept kids off the street with tutoring and other after-school activities. Some would like to see Friendship House or something like it rebuilt. Other parents simply desire greater communication from the school. One disappointed mom described how the school has never even asked for her e-mail.

1 out of 5 residents surveyed in Lackawanna say they have encountered difficulty getting services.



Voices from the Community

Insights and perspectives from those with first-hand experience

These are stories about real people*, individuals in Lackawanna who agreed to talk with us and share some of their personal accounts. We asked them about the challenges they face, about the services and supports that have been helpful to them, barriers, and their goals for the future. Through these individuals, this study's findings are humanized, and a clearer picture emerges as to the interconnectedness of issues.

*Names have been changed for privacy purposes



Dorothy

Support services are crucial to aging in place

Dorothy and her friend go to the Lackawanna senior citizens center every day for lunch. It's a good place to see some familiar faces and keep up with the local news. She has also enjoyed some of the exercise classes they offer there from time to time.

Dorothy worked for 35 years in a variety of jobs: clerk in an insurance company, telemarketing for a while, as a personal care aide, mostly low-paying jobs. So, she earned a modest Social Security retirement and fills in the gaps with food stamps, home heating assistance and HMO coverage through Medicare.

She owns her own home – an inheritance from her late mother – and she's still able to drive, a blessing that makes everything easier.

A Voice from the Community

But she worries about politicians who want to cut programs like SNAP, HEAP and Social Security.

"They don't seem to have a heart for poor people," she said, then corrected herself. "I shouldn't say poor people because I don't feel poor. But lower income people."

Dorothy also worries about what happens later on in life, when a person's mental ability begins to go down hill. Seniors are vulnerable enough to scams and bilkers. What if your children or your siblings aren't around? What if there's no one else to help you sort through all the paperwork?

"You almost have to be a lawyer to understand," she said. "And I'm going to get there someday."



Hattie

Diminished bus service makes ordinary errands a trial

Hattie is a senior citizen with a good place to live and a secure retirement income. She has friends and neighbors who check in on her. She eats well and is in good health. But she doesn't have a car, and it's a major trial to do the weekly shopping on the public buses.

There are no stores in the First Ward, where she lives. So, one day it's the bus to Southgate Plaza for some items. Another day it's Tops and K-Mart for other things. A third day it's the Save-a-Lot and Aldi for more things and her prescriptions, "because you can't carry but so much."

There is a van from the senior center but the service is limited. "If you're not one of the regulars or you don't call up in time, you don't get a chance to ride the van."

Otherwise, it's a long walk to catch the bus and another walk once she gets to her destination, plus a busy street to cross.

A Voice from the Community

"Then I gotta wait another two and a half hours to get back home," Hattie says.

She testified at a public hearing on proposed service reductions by NFTA Metro Bus and she thinks she made a pretty good argument. It makes her angry that people with good jobs and big salaries are making decisions that have such a bad impact on people trying to piece together part-time jobs.

"This was the only way people had to get to work," she said, "and when you take our transportation away, you hurt us."

Hattie worries about children in the neighborhood with nothing to do. And she feels the tensions in a multi-ethnic city. But more than anything else things would be better if the buses ran more often and to more places.



Sophia

Secure, affordable housing is the foundation for a decent life

Sophia is unemployed living in subsidized low-income housing and getting by on Social Security Disability benefits – two facts that make it possible for a woman with multiple health problems to have a decent life.

She suffers from sleep apnea, diabetes, heart problems, shortness of breath. Sophia can walk but not very far. She used to work as a bus aide and as housekeeper in a hotel, and she'd like to return to work, but her health needs to improve first.

A Voice from the Community

Like everyone without a car, getting around is a challenge. Sophia knows the bus routes and schedules by heart: the 42 Lackawanna on Ridge Road, the 36 Hamburg, the 16 South Park.

"In the morning they run pretty regular," she says. "After 3:00 they stink."

She carries her "granny cart" to go shopping and rides the No. 16 to the clinic in Buffalo's Old First Ward to see her doctors. It gets her out of the house.

There is a van to take seniors places. But she doesn't qualify.

"I'm only 52," she said. "You have to be 55 to register for the van."

The apartment is great. There are pull strings in each unit that alert the police in case of emergency. There's bingo, trivia and DJs, in the community room. HUD pays for all but 30 percent of her rent. She pays the rest (putting her at the threshold for being cost burdened).

It's close to the public library where she can find a book to read or get on the computer to read the newspaper. Sometimes they have plays and other programming at the library.

"That's a good outlet," Sophia says. "Somewhere to go."

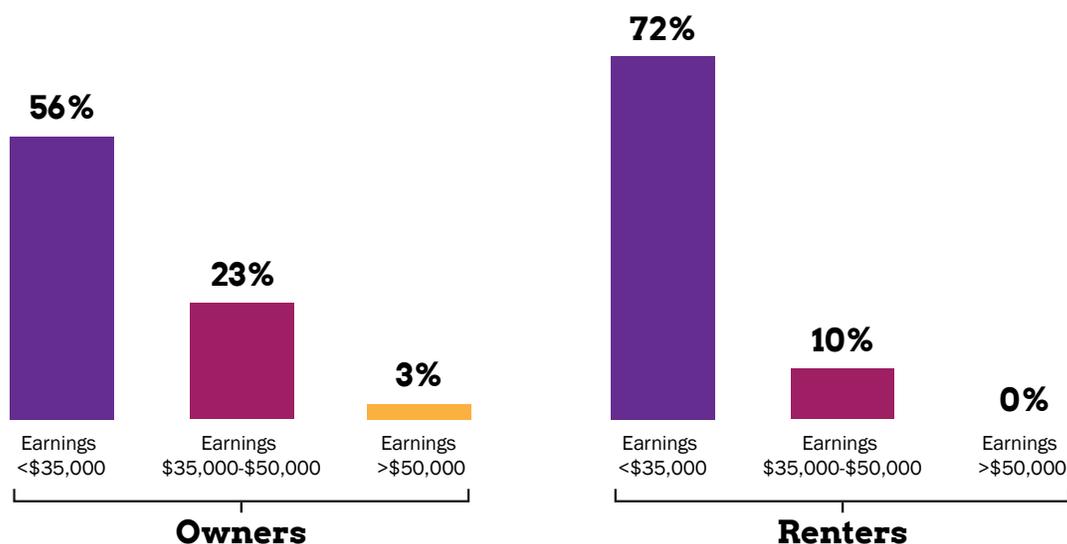
Context for Action

Places in Need



Where we live,
how we travel
and the safety
levels in our
community

Households in Lackawanna Paying 30% or More of Their Income on Housing, 2007-11



Source: 2007-2011 American Community Survey

Housing

There are 9,360 housing units in the City of Lackawanna, many of which can be described as single or two-family homes. Although most of these houses are occupied (87%), close to 1,450 units are vacant, a rate that is higher than it is across Erie County (13% vs. 9.7%). The vast majority of these units (72%) are vacant for reasons other than being temporarily for rent or for sale. The area that appears to be most affected by vacant housing is the portion of the city west of South Park Avenue.

The rate of homeownership in Lackawanna is somewhat low compared to that across Erie County (59% vs. 66%) despite the fact that housing is more affordable than in surrounding municipalities, with the exception of the City of Buffalo. The median house value is \$82,800, which is about \$38,000 less than the median home value across Erie County. About half of all owner-occupied houses have a mortgage. The median housing costs for those with a mortgage is \$992 and \$439 for those without a mortgage. Thirty-three percent of the units with a mortgage spend 30% or more of their household income on housing costs, while only 14% of units without a mortgage spend 30% or more of their household income on housing costs. Fifty-six percent of all owner-occupied households that spend 30% or more of their income on housing costs earn less than \$35,000 a year.

In contrast, there are 3,369 renter-occupied housing units in Lackawanna. With a median rent of \$584, which is about \$120 less than the median rent for all of Erie County, Lackawanna's rental housing is more affordable than in surrounding municipalities. However, approximately 50% of renter households spend 30% or more of their income on housing costs. Most of these are low-income households. In fact, 72% of the renter households that are paying 30% or more of their income on housing costs earn less than \$35,000 a year.

Unfortunately, current housing policy adds to the proportion of families living at the edge of being burdened with housing costs that leave little income left for necessities such as food, transportation, child care programs and more. Those in subsidized housing, for instance, pay 30% of income on housing. Meanwhile, this 30% threshold is considered by HUD to be the cut-off between those who are in affordable housing and those who are cost burdened.

Public Transit Times from the Lackawanna Municipal Housing Authority in the First Ward

Destination	Time of Day	One-Way Travel Time Via Bus	Notes
1 Erie County Department of Social Services	Early Morning	21 min. to 1 hr. 15 min.	Duration of bus ride varies by route and departure time. Requires walking half a mile to the bus stop.
2 Erie County Community College North Campus	Mid-Morning	2 hrs. 30 min.	Requires walking half a mile to the bus stop, two bus transfers or a transfer to MetroRail and then to another bus. Closer campuses do not offer degrees relevant to the jobs in demand in Lackawanna.
3 Wegman's/Tops West Seneca	Noon	30 min. to 1 hr. 25 min.	Duration of ride is shorter during the weekday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and longer during weekday evenings and weekends. On weekdays during the daytime, requires walking 0.2 miles to the bus stop and the same distance from the bus stop to the store. During evenings and weekends, it's 1.4 miles.
4 Walden Galleria Mall	Mid-Morning	1 hr. 20 min. to 2 hr.	Requires walking 0.3 miles to bus stop and three bus transfers.
5 Southwestern Medical Associates	Early Morning	1 hr. 30 min.	Depending on departure time and route, requires walking half a mile to one mile to the bus stop and the same distance from the bus stop to the medical office. The trip also involves two bus transfers.



Transportation

The majority of workers living in Lackawanna use a car, truck, or van to go to work (91%). Seven percent use some other form of transportation to go to work or they work at home (1.6%). Among those using other modes of transportation, 3% use public transit, 3% walk, and less than 1% ride a bicycle. Top destinations for residents employed outside the city include Buffalo, Cheektowaga, West Seneca, and Tonawanda.

1,436 households across the city lack a vehicle. More than half of these households consist of renters, which may suggest that those without a car have lower incomes, are in poverty, or are at risk in another way. The city is rated by WalkScore.com as a “car-dependent” location, which means that “Most errands require a car.” Indeed, even getting to the nearest full-service grocery store 4 miles away in West Seneca takes about 1 1/2 hours one way by bus from the Lackawanna Municipal Housing Authority in Lackawanna’s First Ward on a Saturday afternoon.

1,436

Households without access to a vehicle. A disproportionate number live in the geographically isolated First Ward.

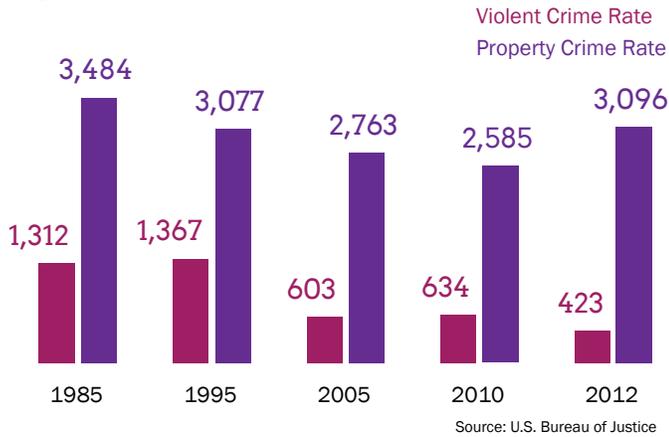
Characteristics of Householders Lacking a Vehicle, 2011

Household by Age	# Renters	# Owners	TOTAL
Householder Under Age 65	633	118	751
Householder Age 65+	415	270	685
Total	1,048	388	1,436

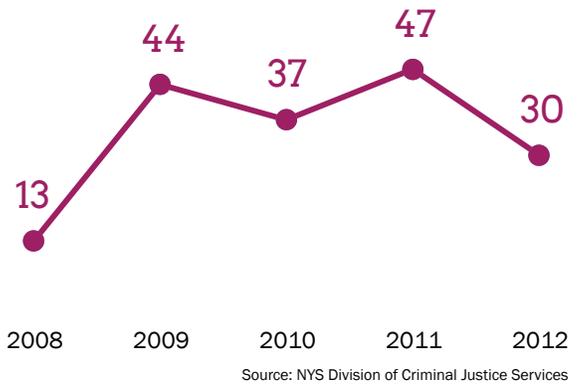
Source: 2007-11 American Community Survey

Job access is another challenge for those who depend on public transportation. A research study conducted in 2005 by a University at Buffalo researcher found “[i]n the Lackawanna first Ward, immediately south of the City of Buffalo’s boundary, eight times as many jobs are accessible by automobile as are accessible by public transit.” This ratio of automobile to public transit job accessibility was larger in Lackawanna than in any other higher poverty community in the region selected for the study, suggesting that those in poverty and dependent on public transit in Lackawanna are currently at a greater disadvantage than anywhere else in the region.

Rates of Crime in Lackawanna Per 100,000 Population, 1985 - 2012



Juvenile Arrests in Lackawanna, 2008-2012



Crime

In terms of violent crime, Lackawanna is safer than it has been over the past 25 years. Rates of violent crime such as murder, rape, robbery and assault are just a fraction of what they used to be decades. Compared to neighboring Buffalo where rates of violent crime are triple what is reported in Lackawanna, this community is a safe place to live. Yet, at the same time, violent crime here towers what exists in neighboring Hamburg and West Seneca where rates stand under 100 incidences per 100,000 population. Aggravated assaults accounted for 70% of violent crimes against persons in Lackawanna.

Property crime
is at a peak

Meanwhile, burglaries and theft comprised the majority of crimes against property. The rate of property crime in Lackawanna is currently four times higher than the rate of violent crimes. The rate is also 61% higher than the statewide rate of property crime (922 incidences per 100,000 in 2012).

Juvenile arrests have increased by 56% since 2008, mainly for offenses such as arson, use of marijuana, weapons possession, criminal mischief, and simple assault. Myriad factors contribute to juvenile crime. Poor school performance, poverty, family problems, especially abuse and lack of supervision, substance abuse and a history of behavioral problems are all risk factors. Protective factors include supportive relationships with adults, parental monitoring and involvement in school activities.

Landscape of Services



Lackawanna
service
providers,
their strengths,
system gaps,
barriers and
promising
developments

HUMAN SERVICES: AGENCY NAME	Target Population				Services										
	Teen Parents	Veterans	Seniors	Homeless	Food	Clothing	Education Training	Affordable Housing	Transportation	Mental Health Addictions	Health/Wellness	Legal	Youth Programs	Financial Literacy	Crime/Juvenile Information Referral
1 Arabic Community Center for Social Services (ACCESS)															
2 Baker Victory Services (4 Locations)															
3 Bethel Presbyterian Church															
4 Catholic Charities (2 Locations)															
Food Pantry															
5 Catholic Health, LIFE Program and Mercy Skilled Nursing Facility				✓											
OLV Family Care Center															
6 Citizens of Lackawanna's Future (CoLF)															
7 City of Lackawanna				✓											
City Council															
Fire Department															
Department of Parks and Recreation (and Senior Center)				✓											
Police Department															
Treatment Court Program/ Mental Health and Drug Court															
Youth Bureau															
8 Community Action Organization				✓											
9 Community Development Corporation (LDCD)/Lackawanna Housing Development Corporation (LHDC)															
10 Community Services for the Developmentally Disabled				✓	✓										
11 Lackawanna Area Chamber of Commerce															
12 Lackawanna City School District															
Global Concepts Charter School				✓											
Martin Road Elementary School															
Parent/Family Resource Center				✓											
Truman Elementary School															
13 Lackawanna Municipal Housing Authority															
Baker Homes Tenant Council Inc.															
Glover Gardens Tenant Council Inc.															
Parkview Towers				✓											
14 Lackawanna Public Library															
15 Ridgewood Village Neighborhood Watch															
16 Monarch Little Learners Academy/ Child Pro (BVS)															
17 Mount Olive Baptist Church															
18 Second Baptist Church				✓											
19 Senior Citizens Complex				✓											
20 St. Anthony Church															

See Data Sources and Notes for definitions

Landscape of Services

Almost two dozen public and private human service supports exist in the City of Lackawanna offering residents food, clothing, health care, information, referrals and more.

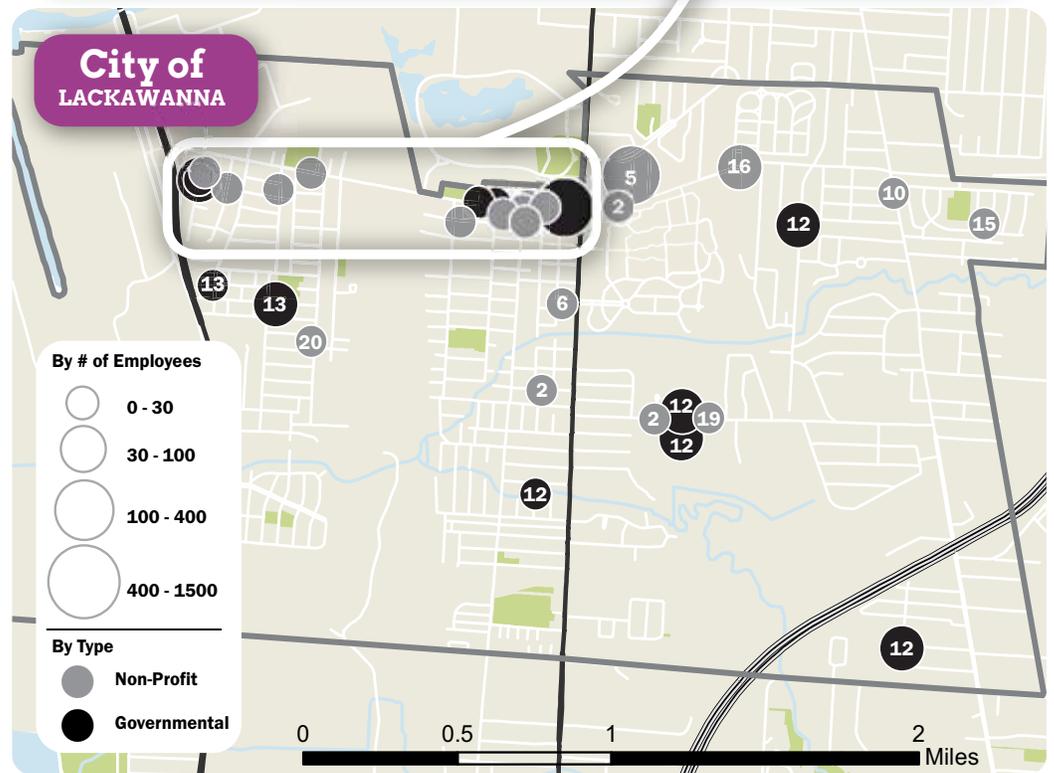
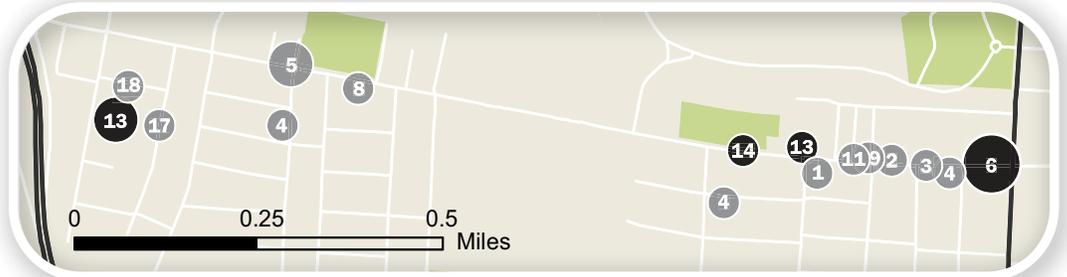
Most providers are not-for-profit organizations with under 30 employees, with only a few larger governmental providers.



Ridge Road and the corridor along South Park are where many service providers are concentrated. The First Ward on the western most edge of the city, is also home to a number of providers, most notably the Lackawanna Municipal Housing Authority.

Among those organizations providing the most comprehensive suite of services are Baker Victory Services, Catholic Health, City of Lackawanna, Community Action Organization, Lackawanna School District, and Lackawanna Public Library.

About 2,215 employees across 20 providers in Lackawanna offer core human services to those in need



Strengths of the System

Residents describe Lackawanna as a friendly, tight-knit community. People know their neighbors and they're willing to help out and take responsibility. They have roots in Lackawanna. Family and neighborhood ties are strong. It's their hometown.

The Lackawanna Public Library is an important community resource. It provides access to books, information, and computing resources. But more than that, it's a civic gathering place, a focal point for public interaction.

The
library
is a community hub

Lackawanna has a high quality senior citizen center. The center provides meals, computer access, educational programming, support for hobbies, and social events for seniors from across the city. The center also provides a van service that gives seniors without cars access to the center and trips to health care and shopping.

The Parent and Family Resource Center at Martin Road Elementary provides information and referrals on needed services. The center connects parents and their children with vital social services including applications for SNAP, HEAP, health insurance and other benefits. It provides them an alternative to traveling downtown to get access to such services.

ACCESS of WNY provides another portal to assistance for an important ethnic minority in Lackawanna. The Arab American Community Center for Economic and Social Services provides residents, mostly in the First Ward, with assistance in obtaining SNAP, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Medicare and Medicaid, and immigration advice. It also serves as a voice for the Arab American Community.

Our Lady of Victory Basilica, Olmsted's South Park and the Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens offer Lackawanna an untapped opportunity to build a visitor-based economy while providing unique amenities for residents.

Catholic Health's LIFE program provides all-inclusive services for seniors. Based in Lackawanna, the program offers in-home care, transportation, and other supports to allow seniors who would otherwise require nursing home placement to stay in their homes for as long as possible.

Lackawanna residents enjoy a relatively low cost of living. Compared with other communities in Western New York, Lackawanna has lower costs, especially in housing and property taxes -- a partial offset to the city's lower income levels and higher rates of unemployment.

Gaps in Services

Reductions in the level of service on NFTA Metro Bus routes has caused hardship for many in Lackawanna. Residents who don't have access to an automobile find it difficult or impossible to get to work, school, health care, shopping or other destinations using public transit. Service on the 16 South Park is strong on weekdays but thin on Saturday and Sunday. The 36 Hamburg bus, which connects Ridge Road to both Downtown and the Village of Hamburg, has hourly service on weekdays. The 42 Lackawanna, which runs along Ridge Road to Union Road, is even less frequent. Neither runs on weekends. The result is that getting to nearby places such as Southgate Plaza, Appletree Business Park, McKinley Mall, and all of Downtown Buffalo involves long waits and/or long walks or are not accessible at all on weekends.

Lackawanna is entirely without a full-service grocery store or supermarket. Major supermarket chains like Tops and Wegmans have stores within a ten minute drive -- but much longer trips by bus, bike, or foot. Otherwise, the only food offerings are at much smaller scale convenience stores or "mom and pops" with typically higher prices, lower quality, and smaller selection. Several food pantries work to fill in the gaps, but the lack of a grocery store remains a hardship for many.

The school district has
cut funding
for after-school
programs

After school programs are limited. The cost of bus transportation home as well as the expense of program personnel has prompted Lackawanna public schools to curtail after school programs offering sports, recreation, and other activities for youth.

The closing of Friendship House has left a permanent void in the life of the community. For forty years, Friendship House provided programs and help for youth and seniors -- food pantry, summer camp, a foster care program -- and a gathering place for the community, especially in the disadvantaged First Ward. Since its closing, nothing has filled the gap.

Information channels aren't working well. Residents report trouble in getting access to information about available services. Some teachers have given up on sending information home with students because it so rarely gets there. The local newspaper covers Lackawanna news but it is by subscription only and not everyone receives the paper.

The public school system performs poorly compared with other districts across the state. While many students in the district come from families mired in poverty or homes where English is not the language of daily life, outside of New York City, Lackawanna Public Schools rank eighth from the bottom among districts in the state. This is particularly distressing because more than half of all adults in the city lack any education or training beyond high school.

Barriers to Connecting with Residents

There is a real sense of hopelessness in Lackawanna, both among service providers and the most hard-pressed residents.

The combination of cuts to service budgets, habits of political conflict and non-communication, persistent signs of growing inter-generational poverty and a sense that the rest of the region ignores Lackawanna's needs leaves many with a feeling that nothing can be done to improve conditions.

Tensions between not-for-profit service providers and local government hamper efforts to improve coordination and collaboration.

Community based organizations sense that local governments resent their tax-exempt status. This tends to exacerbate difficulties in promoting cooperation between public and not-for-profit sectors.

Cultural differences between resident groups generates additional tension that hampers collaboration.

As small as it is, Lackawanna suffers from divisions by race, religion, ethnic group, socio-economic status and geography. For instance, while the needs of Lackawanna's Arab-American community attract some focus, African-American residents sometimes resent attention given

to Arab Americans. Meanwhile more affluent white residents worry about what goes on in the other parts of town.

Lackawanna's First Ward, in particular, is isolated from the rest of the city.

Poverty is most concentrated in the First Ward. It is a long and dangerous walk across the bridge that

spans a major north-south railroad installation. Between Tiftt Street in South Buffalo and Lake Avenue in Blasdell, only Ridge Road connects these two parts of Lackawanna.

Lackawanna's two-tiered tax rate discourages business investment within the city limits.

In the days when Bethlehem Steel paid the lion's share of property taxes in Lackawanna, the city's differential property tax rate – about 2 1/2 times higher for commercial property than "homestead" – was a manageable inequity. Now that Bethlehem is gone, the system tends to ensure that jobs will be created in other locations. Yet jobs – and jobs located close by – are the number one thing that many Lackawanna residents need the most.

Educators report widespread apathy among parents of children enrolled in Lackawanna Public Schools.

It is not untypical, some say, for only a few parents to show up for a parent-teacher night or to participate in other activities.

As an Erie County Consortium member, **block grants (CDBG) have been awarded to Lackawanna for brick and mortar projects only.**

Promising Developments

New York State Senator Tim Kennedy's recent community meeting brought many together to talk about a better future for Lackawanna. It was a first step toward getting people to work together, but it was a good one.

With support from Sen. Kennedy, the Chamber has formed a new group to engage stakeholders in business development. The first two monthly meetings were well attended, with representation from local, county and state officials. Priorities include discontinuing tax breaks at the Bethlehem Steel site; incentivizing the beautification of Ridge Road; and partnering with Blasdell to pave South Park.

The issue of Lackawanna's two-tiered property tax system is at on the public agenda. Last year the Mayor proposed a significant tax cut with most of the savings targeted at businesses which currently pay a disproportionate share of taxes.

The Lackawanna Department of Parks and Recreation recently began offering an open gym program at the high school, reflecting a welcome advance in collaboration between city government and the public schools. However, ACCESS reports not being able to establish similar arrangements for its programs.

A programs officer was recently hired by Baker Homes Tenant Council, Inc. to oversee programming at the LMHA Resource Center, enabling the Council to better serve residents in service coordination and with educational and employment goals.

Curly's Grill and Banquet Center on Ridge Road has proven that businesses can thrive in Lackawanna. It's not a recent development, but Curly's has drawn customers, not just from Lackawanna and nearby, but from all over the region.

The spotlight being shone on Lackawanna because of the OLV Basilica **creates an opportunity for greater tourism and expanded connections within the region's overall strategy to advance historic and cultural tourism.**

The second annual Community Fun Days, which included human services information and health screenings, drew many from the community. Its success, and the draw of other community events such as the Youth Bureau's Winter Fest, offer strong venues for outreach to residents and agency partnerships.

Pipelines into health care careers will be strengthened as a result of P-TECH, a program for Lackawanna High School students kicking off in September 2014, offering opportunities for a free associate's degree through Trocaire College, mentoring, internships and other supports.

Newly formed block clubs are an effective means for increasing neighborhood safety and quality of life. The Ridgewood Village Neighborhood Watch is a strong model for others.

The tax rate for
businesses is
2.5X
that for homeowners

Insights from the Field

Recommendations and Best Practices

Where we gathered our information and what we are reporting

These insights, recommendations and strategies for achieving them are intended to spur thought and assist the community in developing its own priorities and action plans.

They come from a distillation of information gathered from a wide range of sources: dozens of agency interviews conducted by the Mobile Safety-Net Team; follow-up interviews by the UB Regional Institute; a focus group with providers held in December 2013; and conversations with residents at the Senior Citizens Center, Lackawanna Public Library, and Second Baptist Church.

Local data from secondary sources also inform these findings and recommendations.



Building on existing synergy, create a coalition of human services providers to strengthen information channels and facilitate partnerships

A lack of communication among agencies of city government, the public schools, faith-based organizations, and community-based not-for-profit service providers is considered widespread. Although tensions exist in several directions, there is enormous potential for providers to learn about the services of each other, share ideas, collaborate and together apply for funding and advocate for additional resources. The recent community meeting sponsored by Senator Kennedy could be a first step toward establishing a more formal process of information sharing, coordination, and collaboration. But action to take advantage of the opening is needed soon.

STRATEGIES

Convene a summit of human services providers to take advantage of the moment, offering leaders an opportunity to network, learn about best practices and problem solve around areas where the

safety-net could be strengthened. This assessment of strengths, gaps, barriers, and promising developments could provide a guide for advancing that work.

Based on the results of the summit, build a coalition of governmental, not-for-profit and faith-based providers and other stakeholders (such as the Chamber of Commerce) to further facilitate collaboration, strengthen communication, advocate for shared interest, collaborate on funding applications, and demonstrate collective impacts on the City of Lackawanna (such as employment, provision of public services, and contributions to social vitality).

Create a listserv to facilitate communication among providers on topics of interest – grant opportunities, job opportunities, training programs, events, new programs and human services tools; Invite in speakers to expand provider knowledge about services and support tools such as 2-1-1 WNY.

WHO NEEDS TO ACT

Broad-based participation across these sectors, including government, is essential. A trusted neutral convener can help organize the effort and mitigate historical tensions among the partners. The Mobile Safety Net Team is one possibility among others.

MODELS TO CONSIDER

A first-ever poverty conference held at Niagara University convened over 125 human services providers to problem solve and mobilize the provider community.

<http://news.niagara.edu/niagara-university-hosts-conference-on-poverty-and-homelessness/>

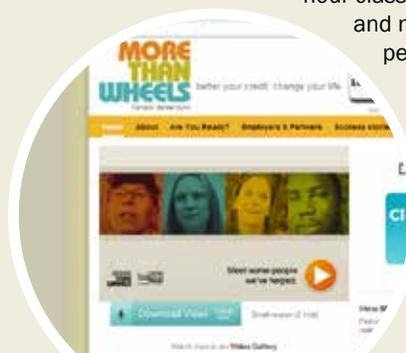
MODELS TO CONSIDER

MORE THAN WHEELS

More than Wheels is a non-profit organization based in Manchester, N.H. that helps low income individuals “find and negotiate a reliable, fuel-efficient car with a low sticker price and low interest rate.” To qualify, individuals should (1) have enough income to make monthly car payments and cover other expenses, (2) have a stable job and place to live, (3) be paying off any pre-existing debts, and (4) have basic skills and personal attributes that indicate readiness for the program. Only 55% of applicants are admitted. If selected, they attend six two-hour classes with homework on topics like budgeting, money management, the impact of health and nutrition on finances, credit, and the car-buying process. With coaching, they develop a personal strategy to repair their credit and follow it until they are in good shape to buy a car.

When ready, they get help selecting the right car, negotiating a price, and securing a loan through partner dealerships, banks, and credit unions. Ongoing support and advocacy are available for the life of the loan. To date, over 1,500 New England residents have financed more than \$16 million in car loans, and only 5% have defaulted. In 2012, the program costs \$1,298,000 to operate. Program fees paid by clients covered 25% of operating costs; lenders covered loan origination fees; and the rest was funded through foundations, corporate sponsors, and individual donors. Clients raise their credit score by 38 points on average and find they have a better overall financial outlook.

<http://morethanwheels.org/>



Encourage business investment and innovation to grow the number of jobs

While the problems of the poor are typically “wicked problems” -- they have multiple interrelated causes and impacts -- employment can improve an individual’s condition as dramatically as any other thing. Unfortunately, Lackawanna has not been a center of job growth since Bethlehem Steel closed more than 30 years ago. Residents seeking employment typically have to go beyond the city limits, something that’s not always easy for those who lack transportation. Fundamental changes are needed to encourage businesses to start-up, locate, or expand in Lackawanna -- addressing the local property tax structure, aligning with promising regional developments, but also forging strategies to take advantage of local assets.

STRATEGIES

Support the Lackawanna Area Chamber of Commerce’s newly formed economic development task force, created with support from Senator Kennedy, to propel business in Lackawanna and advance priorities. Ensure cross-representation with broader regional economic development efforts.

Although proposals have been made for an across-the-board reduction in non-homestead property tax rates, providing differential rates on a flexible basis to specified classes of property may have

more impact on job creation. It deserves further study and public consideration, both in terms of the potential for promoting business expansion, start-ups or relocations and in terms of generating necessary local revenues for municipal operations and schools.

With redevelopment at the former Bethlehem Steel site, explore whether continuing PILOTS are necessary and, if so, ensure they benefit the city and residents in ways other than tax generation such as the employment of residents or substantial increases in taxable land values.

Consider PILOT as a way to incentivize the beautification of Ridge Road by offering tax breaks on any increase in property value.

Initiatives to attract visitors and tourism dollars by leveraging attractions such as Our Lady of Victory Basilica and the Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens deserve concerted support. The Basilica, in particular, has drawn national attention recently. Linking promotion of these attractions to other heritage and cultural tourism destinations (e.g. the Darwin Martin Complex or the H. H. Richardson Center) would be a natural. Partnerships with local restaurants and hotels will provide additional support.

Lackawanna leaders should reach out to Empire State Development Corporation to ensure the city is included in planning through the Regional Economic Development Council.

WHO NEEDS TO ACT

A partnership of Lackawanna elected officials and leaders of the business community, including the ECIDA, will be needed to advance each of these strategies. The Mobile Safety Net Team can assist as a neutral convener if necessary. Additional research and analytical support may be needed.

MODELS TO CONSIDER

The Elmwood Village Business Association has been a critical resource in revitalizing a neighborhood that decades ago was known for crime, vacant store fronts and devalued housing.

<http://www.elmwoodvillage.org>

MODELS TO CONSIDER

SIDE STREET TO MAIN STREET

The Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit organization based in Middletown, Connecticut that represents 2,000 members of the business community. Its programs include business counseling, networking, lobbying at the state level, and economic development. Its most distinguished program, the “Side Street to Main Street Business and Leadership Development Program,” is a yearlong course for minority business owners lacking formal business training. Its goal is to enhance their “business planning [skills], personal leadership attributes, management and time mastery skills, and excellence in sales and customer service.” It was suggested by the Middlesex County National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the mid-nineties and has been in operation for the last seventeen years. The program consists of three to four hour work sessions over a sixteen week period and two hours of outside reading and written homework for each hour of class. The program costs \$5,000 per participant, but it is free to participants thanks to a generous sponsorship from a member organization. With just sixteen spaces, however, the admissions process is competitive. Approximately 30 applications are received each year. To date, two hundred business owners have graduated from the program and several awards have recognized the program’s success.

<http://www.middlesexchamber.com/pages/SideStreettoMainStreetProgram>



Increase the availability of out-of-school activities for youth, especially those living in the First Ward

After-school programs, especially for young people who live in the First Ward, have been relatively unavailable. The Lackawanna Public Schools were forced to discontinue after-school programs because of a lack of funding for operations and transportation home. Interscholastic sports are offered only at the high school with limited offerings for intramural or club sports. First Ward residents, especially, continue to feel the impact of the closure of Friendship House more than a decade ago. Meanwhile, programs at private or charter schools are not open to public school students (even though charter school students take advantage of varsity sports at Lackawanna High School). The YMCA offers some recreational programs, but academic support programs are missing. The recent addition of open gym programs as a collaboration between Lackawanna Parks and Recreation and the schools may offer a model for how to proceed.

STRATEGIES

Explore ways for public, charter, and private schools to collaborate to offer programming to students regardless of enrollment status. These efforts, of course, must address joint funding models for programs, which might be facilitated through incentive grants.

The Lackawanna Public Library is already a hub for after-school activity and has the physical space for and interest in expanding programming to include, potentially, tutoring, music programs for teens and job seeking supports. The New York Public Library offers a useful model for free after-school programs to students.

With support from the city, school district and community nonprofits, consider developing a YES (Youth Engaged in Service) Program, offering youth out-of-school volunteer opportunities that cultivate job skills through service learning and typically offer needed assistance to seniors and others.

Support Baker Tenant Council and Mt. Olive Church's interest in applying for funding to expand after-school programming for youth. Support development, also, of after-school programming at LMHA's Resource Center (formerly the Truitt Center) that could be strengthened through partnerships, particularly with the recently hiring of a program manager at this site. The Niagara Falls Housing Authority offers a model for youth programming (see Model to Consider below).

Begin the work of planning for a community center to replace Friendship House – an initiative that would go beyond concerns about after-school programming to include seniors and families, extend to social services, health care, adult education and address the need for places where the whole community can meet.

WHO NEEDS TO ACT

An inclusive consortium of providers – city, schools, YMCA, library, and others – should convene to conduct a collaborative service planning process. This should create an inventory of programming to be compared with a delineation of perceived needs as the foundation for a plan that would identify programs, venues, and funds to proceed. Any effort to create a new community center will require an even broader group. Neutral facilitation may be a crucial need in this process.

MODELS TO CONSIDER

Through nearly 100 partnerships, the Niagara Falls Housing Authority offers at-risk youth a myriad of out-of-school options <http://nfha.org>

MODELS TO CONSIDER

NIAGARA FALLS HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Niagara Falls Housing Authority (NFHA) has provided housing services to low income individuals and families for over 70 years. It operates 5 complexes with over 900 units, serving about 1,110 residents. Going beyond the traditional role of landlord, NFHA coordinates the delivery of dozens of community programs to enable residents to have a better quality of life and access economic opportunities. Programs include state-certified daycare, after-school and summer enrichment, drug use and violence prevention, self-esteem building programs, college and job readiness, health education and clinics, senior services, and community events. They even have a regionally acclaimed youth choir, two college scholarships, and a cable TV show. Many programs are offered at community facilities and integrated into the housing complex. The facilities have office space, multi-purpose rooms, a library, kitchens, athletic and entertainment areas, and computer labs; and they are available to any city resident. The programs are run partly or entirely by partner organizations, such as NCCC, Niagara County Employment and Training, Niagara University, and Niagara Falls High School. Some are even organized by resident leaders and have a strong intergenerational component. The Authority's budget for 2012-2013 was \$6.9 million, with most from government operating grants and tenant rental income.

<http://nfha.org>



Expand opportunities for vocational training and workforce development

Gaining secure employment at a living wage is perhaps the most important thing adults in Lackawanna need to accomplish. The barriers to doing so, however, are multiple including lack of educational credentials beyond high school, inadequate transportation for job-seeking as well as for getting to work, and lack of “pipelines” to specific employment opportunities in our region. An array of initiatives should be undertaken and supported to address these needs, starting with improving connections between local institutions, especially the public schools, with regional organizations that provide needed education, training and placement services.

STRATEGIES

Establish a partnership with “Dream it Do it” of Western New York to strengthen the pipeline for Lackawanna residents to careers in advanced manufacturing. Partnerships between Lackawanna School District, BOCES, ECC, Baker Homes Tenant Council, trades unions, local employers that are hiring and potential work sites such as the former Lincoln School may offer not only opportunities for vocational training but to also rehabilitate underutilized community resources. The Isaiah 61 Project in Niagara Falls with its myriad partnerships offers a successful model.

Raise awareness among parents and students of Lackawanna High School’s new P-TECH program offering a strong bridge between high school and careers in the health care industry, with the opportunity

for students to earn, free of charge, an associate’s degree from Trocaire College, along with opportunities for mentoring and internships.

Increase awareness of and accessibility to training for careers in health care taking place at Apple Tree Mall in Cheektowaga. These programs feed the Catholic Health System which can’t recruit enough home health aides for its programs. Solving the transportation problem for students will be part of making such an effort a success.

Support Baker Homes Tenant Council’s recent partnership with an agency in Niagara Falls for over \$1 million in grant funding for a jobs training program.

Create internship opportunities for at-risk high school students through a partnership between the school district, the Chamber of Commerce, vocational trainers and the housing authority. Such a program will help young people “get a foot in the door” or at least gain some job experience to offer to other employers.

Make sure high school students, recent graduates, and other young people are aware of the job readiness and job training resources offered at UB’s Economic Opportunity Center and through the Buffalo Employment and Training Center.

WHO NEEDS TO ACT

Lackawanna Public Schools leadership should reach out to principals in the Western New York Dream It Do It organization to build those links. Schools leadership might also invite Catholic Health Systems, EOC, BETC and others to high school career fairs to spread the word about their offerings.

MODELS TO CONSIDER

Dream It Do It. is a growing national initiative being implemented regionally to promote careers in advanced manufacturing.

<http://www.didiwny.com/>

MODELS TO CONSIDER

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

The New York Public Library is the largest public library system in the US. Its youth programs are noteworthy for combining the best of in-person and online services. Starting in January 2014, the “BridgeUp” program will help five groups of ten eighth grade students from underserved communities develop a supportive network in which to prepare “to thrive in college and career.” The library will offer a safe place in which they can get homework help, tutoring, guided creative time, and life/study/college prep skills every weekday from 3 to 6PM through the school year. Selected students are expected to remain in the program through grade 12 and non-disadvantaged youth and college students can help as volunteers. Outside the program, homework help is available in person, by phone, and on the web through services like “Dial-a-Teacher” and “HomeworkNY,” which are sponsored by the United Federation of Teachers and the New York City Department of Education. Events like Kids LIVE and Youth LIVE bring famous authors and artists to the library for engaging discussions and performances with children and youth, which are recorded and uploaded to YouTube and iTunes. To bridge the “digital divide,” the library has wireless laptops that can be reserved at no cost for use in the library, free printing, and technology classes. To make the community aware of these services, library staff works with schools to organize trips to the library or presentations at PTA meetings and open school nights.

<http://ci.champaign.il.us/departments/neighborhood-services>



Expand supports for affordable and flexible transportation

Recent reductions in scheduled Metro Bus service in Lackawanna -- limited services on the 42 Ridge Road and 36 Hamburg routes and no service on weekends -- have made it far more difficult for people in car-less households to get to work, shopping, health care or other destinations. Even when service is available, the \$4 return trip fare is not insignificant for low-income patrons. In any case, without substantial new funding for NFTA service, Lackawanna residents will be forced to piece together stop-gap approaches to providing access to essential destinations. There are some resources to build on, however, in churches and community centers as well as in the depths of individual generosity.

STRATEGIES

With many faith-based organizations in Lackawanna supplying a potentially large number of volunteers, explore the possibility of bringing a service like Hearts and Hands Faith in Action to Lackawanna, offering free transportation to seniors and potentially other vulnerable adults. Also, the Ford Friendship Express Program offers free vans annually to area nonprofits in need of transportation.

Expand information and awareness among seniors in the First Ward about requirements for using the senior van (eligibility, advance notice required, cost, etc.) and explore suggestions that seniors from the First Ward are treated differently than others in terms of services provided.

Explore partnerships between major grocers outside the community and subsidized housing to enable low income residents to travel for food shopping. Wegmans does this in the Rochester area, picking up seniors from 70 different subsidized housing complexes via a partnership with Medical Motor buses.

WHO NEEDS TO ACT

Perhaps the best way to address the full scope of these recommendations would be to convene a broad stakeholder group including senior centers, community groups, churches with vans, and representatives of the grocery destinations. From there, an inventory of services, gap analysis, and collaborative service plan -- using volunteers or paid drivers -- could be developed.

MODELS TO CONSIDER

Hearts and Hands Faith in Action offers free support services, including transportation, to vulnerable seniors in underserved rural communities of WNY by engaging churches and volunteers. It's a model that could be tailored to a community's needs.

<http://hnhcares.org/>

Strengthen supports for food and health promotion

Transportation-focused initiatives to give residents better access to supermarkets in Buffalo, West Seneca and Hamburg will help improve access to healthy food, especially for isolated residents in the First Ward. But other efforts to expand access, choice and quality should also be undertaken, especially since the need is only partly about getting to the supermarket. It is also about being able to afford what is on the shelves and understanding better what constitutes a healthy diet. Strategies that deepen self-sufficiency and focus on people in isolated neighborhoods are likely to pay off.

STRATEGIES

Partner with farmers to bring farmers markets to the First Ward during summer and fall months. Work with the Food Bank of WNY to get the Food Express Truck into Lackawanna, particularly the First Ward. Sites could also feature nutrition and cooking workshops by Cornell Cooperative Extension, providing instruction that is culturally sensitive to food choices and family budgets.

Tapping into expertise at Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo, expand community-based and home-based gardens, which offer free and low-cost access to fresh foods and increase resident self-sufficiency. The Massachusetts Avenue Project is another Buffalo-based best model that could help strengthen supports for food. Community gardening is also a good way to build relationships among neighbors and mobilize residents for other constructive projects.

WHO NEEDS TO ACT

The coalition of providers recommended elsewhere in this report should designate an agency to reach out to the entities located elsewhere in the region to promote these initiatives: Grassroots Gardens, Massachusetts Avenue Project, Food Bank of Western New York, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and others.

MODELS TO CONSIDER

The Massachusetts Avenue Project on the West Side of Buffalo is increasing fresh and affordable food in lower-income areas.

<http://mass-ave.org/>

Expand supports for families, especially those living in the First Ward

Even if the other recommendations offered here can be implemented, some families will continue to face severe challenges in gaining education, training, employment and the self-sufficiency that comes with them. Additional help should be organized by those living in the most challenging poverty -- particularly in Lackawanna's First Ward. Programs that combine multiple services and include close mentoring of young parents can be the most effective.

STRATEGIES

Explore the possibility of implementing a More Than Wheels Program to remove financial and transportation barriers to job training and work, especially for jobs in the home health field where regional demand is high.

Tap into expertise and existing partnerships of the Niagara Falls Housing Authority to expand services for families and parents in similar ways in the First Ward. Financial literacy/budgeting, careering counseling and parent training are among the programs that should be considered.

Explore ways of expanding programming at the Lackawanna Public Library, an existing community hub that has the physical space to expand programming to offer programs for adults as well as youth such as job-seeking and cover letter writing workshops, parent groups and financial literacy.

WHO NEEDS TO ACT

Complex initiatives such as those recommended here require broad-based participation by providers. The proposed consortium of providers will be the place to start. However, successful programs will need to link organizations on the ground in Lackawanna with regional providers such as Economic Opportunity Center, Buffalo Employment and Training Center, NFTA, and many others. For programs based in public housing, the Lackawanna Housing Authority is an obvious key player. The involvement of outside agencies with useful experience (i.e. NFHA) is also crucial.

MODELS TO CONSIDER

Niagara Falls Housing Authority's ATAIN Lab offers free computer training, educational supports and job readiness services to all residents of Niagara County. Key partners in making this possible include SUNY and Microsoft.

<http://nfha.org/what-we-do/advanced-technology-training-and-information-networking-attain-lab/> and

<http://www.atain.suny.edu/index.php>

Establish a forum for mobilizing and empowering residents to advance priority issues

While some recent developments in Lackawanna have been cause for optimism, a widespread sense of hopelessness is discernible in the city, particularly among residents of the First Ward, but also more broadly. The need is clear for people to learn how to work together toward common interests and to advocate for the needs of their community. Some of the most stubborn impediments to this process are the cultural and social divisions between groups within the city. Successful strategies to mobilize the community must seek ways to overcome these divisions.

STRATEGIES

Partner with PUSH Buffalo, an organization that was established on the West Side of Buffalo by two individuals who wanted to make high quality affordable housing a reality and cultivate the community leadership to help shape the policy and planning for this to happen. The PUSH approach emphasizes deep citizen participation and aggressive organizing around issues that matter to residents. In Lackawanna they might start with restoration of cuts on the 42 Lackawanna (Ridge Road) Metro Bus route.

Take advantage of the free citizen planning school being made available as part of One Region Forward, to help empower residents in making their community more sustainable. Residents from all communities will be recruited beginning February 2014, and stipends to cover the cost of transportation and child care are available. Instruction will focus, not only on sustainability issues like food, housing, and transportation, but also on understanding the planning and policy-making process.

Nominate and sponsor eligible and promising individuals for participation in Leadership Buffalo, United Way's Young Leaders Society and Buffalo Business First's 30 Under Thirty. Such programs can bring new attention to the needs of Lackawanna as they expose emerging leadership to a broader understanding of regional issues and processes.

WHO NEEDS TO ACT

Community organizing starts in the community. In the First Ward groups like ACCESS and Second Baptist Church need to be involved in any PUSH-like enterprise. They may soon reach out to regional or even national foundations for support, as PUSH has done, but they need to begin in the neighborhood.

Implementing the second and third recommendations here will be easy by comparison. Groups or individuals can reach out directly to the organizations involved. Programs are free or scholarships are available across the board.

MODELS TO CONSIDER

Community organizing for the benefit of neighborhoods and Buffalo's West Side is at the core of PUSH Buffalo, an organization that was recently awarded \$3.5 million for its housing work.

<http://pushbuffalo.org/>

Appendices

Appendix A - Data Sources and Notes

1.1 Cover Map

Service providers: The human service providers that are mapped are listed on page 24 of the report. The cover map does not represent these providers by their employment size or organizational status as the inside map (see page 25) does.

Population in poverty: The map draws upon 2006-10 American Community Survey data at the block group level, with all municipal boundaries for the map from U.S. Census Bureau's 2011 and 2012 Tiger Line Shape files. Those in or near poverty are individuals whose income is under 200% of the federal poverty level.

Transportation: NFTA routes and bus stops are from the NFTA and reflect 2012 information.

Schools: The location of elementary and secondary schools in Newfane is from the 2012 NYS School Report Card database available from the NYS Education Department. Total enrollment reflects total students enrolled at these schools during 2011-12.

Major Employers: Selected large employers in Lackawanna are shown on the map. Employment size was determined using Reference USA's 2012 Business Database.

Map Layers: Boundary files for Lackawanna, including census tracts, block groups, parks, roads, water bodies and more, were mapped using data from the NYS GIS Clearinghouse and the U.S. Census Bureau 2011 and 2012 Tiger Line Shape files.

1.2 Executive Summary

Population in poverty: The 2007-11 American Community Survey are the sources of data on individuals living in or near poverty and total. Those in poverty are individuals with incomes under the federal poverty level. Those near poverty are defined as those with incomes between 100% and 200% of the federal poverty level. Lackawanna's total population is from the 2007-11 American Community Survey and has been rounded to the nearest 10.

Indicators and trends: Population, poverty and demographic data and trends are from the 2000 Census and the 2007-11 American Community Survey.

The 2007-11 American Community Survey also provides data on Lackawanna's foreign born population and the proportion of households that are cost burdened.

Lackawanna Public School District's standing against others in upstate New York is from Buffalo Business First's 2013 Upstate New York School District Rankings, available online at <http://www.bizjournals.com/buffalo/news/2013/10/10/2013-upstate-new-york-school-district.html?page=all>. Upstate is defined as the 48 counties in New York excluding the five counties that comprise New York City.

Information on urgent concerns of residents and the employment of vulnerable residents come from a resident survey conducted by the Mobile Safety-Net Team, described in more detail on pages 14-15 and 37.

Interviews with provided conducted by the Mobile Safety Net Team was the source of other information.

1.3 Context for Action

People in Need

Individuals and Families: Population and household counts are from the 2007-11 American Community Survey. Population data from the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census were used to calculate changes from these dates for both the total population and trends by age group.

As defined by the Census, families are housing units where two or more persons related by birth, marriage or adoption reside. Non-family households include persons living alone or with another person not related by birth, marriage or adoption.

Population by Age: The 2007-2011 American Community Survey is the source of population counts by age group. Percentages are calculated by dividing the number of individuals in various age groups by the total population for Lackawanna and Erie and Niagara Counties, respectively.

Potentially At-Risk Populations: These are individuals and households that have experienced higher than average rates of poverty as a result of barriers to education and/or work, either themselves or by those they are dependent on, as in the case for young children. Counts are from and/or calculated using data from the 2007-11 American Community Survey. The listing is not intended to be inclusive of all possible groups that may be economically vulnerable but rather some of those that are significant to Lackawanna or Erie and Niagara Counties.

Work and Income: Employment by sector is from the 2007-11 American Community Survey. It reflects employment of residents from Lackawanna in jobs located in Lackawanna and beyond.

Lackawanna's top employers are from a variety of sources: the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 Census of Governments was the source of employment for the City of Lackawanna; the NYS Education Department's 2011-12 Report Card for the Lackawanna City School District was the source of employment for the district; and a leader from Catholic Health provided employment for this agency's employment in Lackawanna. The rest of the estimates come from Reference USA's Business Database, downloaded on March 25, 2014. Employment reflects full and part-time jobs.

Household by income level come were calculated using data from the 2007-11 American Community Survey. This was also the data source of the average and median income in Lackawanna.

The U.S. Census Bureau's Local Employment Dynamics data for 2010, available online through the OnTheMap tool, was used to calculate the work destination of residents at three different pay levels: (i) Less than \$1,250 per month, (ii) between \$1,250 and \$3,333 per month and (iii) over \$3,333 per month.

Poverty: The 2006-11 American Community Survey is the source of data on individuals and families living in or near poverty. Income relative to poverty level is provided for individuals by age group and for families by family type. Poverty rates are calculated by dividing total individuals or families with incomes under the federal poverty threshold by the total number of individuals or families, respectively. The map shows poverty rates by census block group.

The daily amount a family of three lives on at the federal poverty level is calculated by dividing the 2013 annual poverty threshold for this family size by the number of family members and the number of days in a year. The cost of the a round trip by bus for a family of three was calculated using NFTA's standard one-way fare of \$2.

Edmunds was used to calculate the cost of car ownership. The estimate is based on the purchase of a used 2008 Chevrolet Cobalt. In addition to the cost of the car itself (about \$6,800), the cost reflects, taxes and fees, financing, fuel, insurance, maintenance and repairs. \$20.00 is the average daily cost over five years of ownership.

Poverty levels were examined by census tract within Lackawanna using 2006-11 American Community Survey data. These included Census Tracts 123, 124, 125.01 125.02, 162 and a part of 174.

Education: Student enrollment figures and the percentage of children qualifying for free and reduced priced lunch are from the 2012 School Report Card database, available from the NYS Education Department. Children qualify for free or reduced priced lunch if their family income is under 185% of the federal poverty level. Academic performance for students is calculated with data from the same source, which is provided for individual schools and for different categories of students. .

Educational attainment levels are from the 2007-11 American Community Survey.

Lackawanna's Most Vulnerable

263 adults residing in Lackawanna Zip Codes 14218 completed a one-page questionnaire providing demographic and socioeconomic data as well as information on human services needs, concerns, benefits, and access barriers. All survey takers who reported living in this Zip Code were assumed to live in the city of Lackawanna and are included in the analysis, even though this Zip Code covers small portions of the City of Buffalo as well.

The survey was prepared by the Mobile Safety-Net Team with input from the University at Buffalo Regional Institute. It was administered by the Mobile Safety-Net Team during 2013 at several different venues across the town, including Catholic Charities- Lackawanna Food Pantry, Lackawanna Public Library, Monarch Little Learners Center (Baker Victory Services), Lackawanna Senior Center, Second Baptist Church, Lackawanna Municipal Housing Authority, Truman Elementary School, Martin Rd Elementary School, ACCESS (Arabic Community Center for Economic & Social Services), Lackawanna Islamic Mosque, and Bethel Presbyterian Church Dinner.

Survey sites were selected to capture a representative sample of residents in poverty or at risk of poverty as well as a cross section of neighborhoods from within the city. Because the survey captured only those residents who are able to physically get to these sites, the survey findings may under-represent those who are unable to leave their homes due to disability or lack of transportation.

Where residents needed assistance completing the survey and the survey was conducted in the presence of Mobile Safety-Net Team members, assistance was provided by reading the survey questions to residents and helping them complete the survey instrument. Otherwise, clients completed surveys on their own.

Survey data were coded by the Mobile Safety-Net Team and analyzed by the University at Buffalo Regional Institute. The 263 surveys represent a sample of Lackawanna's vulnerable population that is statistically significant with a confidence level of 95% and with a confidence interval of 6. Surveys completed by household representatives who reported a Zip Codes corresponding to an area entirely outside the City of Lackawanna were not included in the analysis.

Not all survey respondents answered every survey questions. Part of the reason for this is that the survey was expanded a bit over time. Thus, not all survey takers were asked all questions reported in this report. Secondly, while survey takers were encouraged to answer all questions, partially completed surveys were accepted from those who declined to answer particular questions. The question soliciting information on household income had the lowest level of responses, with 194 answering this question (68 offered no response). However, this number of responses still represents a sample size

of 95 or better, needed to obtain a statistically significant sample size for Lackawanna's at-risk population within a 95% confidence interval +/- 10%.

The two-thirds of survey respondents who are said to receive some form of human support services or live in a household with someone who does reflect those survey takers saying they receive food stamps, Medicaid, cash benefits, unemployment, disability income, HEAP, SSI/SSD, WIC, and/or rental assistance. This information is captured by multiple questions on the survey and the findings from these questions are aggregated to calculate an overall percentage of those receiving some kind of assistance.

The chart presents selected findings from the questionnaire. The variables shown are in many cases an aggregation of two or more response categories. Where percentages across subcategories add up to over 100, it is because survey takers were allowed to select more than one category as their response to the question, as is the case of the question soliciting information on respondent household's sources of income and types of human benefits they receive.

Percentage shown are calculated based on the number of respondents answering the particular survey question, which may be less than the full sample.

Because the survey asked about benefits households are currently receiving or have applied for, responses associated with seasonal benefits such as HEAP may be sensitive to the time of year when the survey was conducted.

Places in Need

Housing: Housing costs as a percentage of income for renters and owners are from the 2007-11 American Community Survey. This was also the source of information on median housing values, median rents and the proportion of residents who own and rent.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, households paying more than 30% of income on housing are considered cost burdened, as this standard is generally accepted as the cut-off for affordable housing. Those paying more than 50% are considered severely burdened. Low-income households lacking affordable housing are at particular risk of not being able to afford other necessities such as food, clothing, medical care and transportation. The U.S. Census Bureau tracks household data for both the 30% and 50% standard.

The source for the UB study that was referenced is: Hess, D., "Access to Employment for Adults in Poverty in the Buffalo-Niagara Region," *Urban Stud* 2005; 42; 1177.

Transportation: Vehicle access data for households in Lackawanna are from the 2006-11 American Community Survey. This is also the

source of data on how workers in Lackawanna travel to their jobs.

Public transit times are calculated from the Lackawanna Municipal Housing Authority's location in the First Ward to various destinations within Erie County. Transit times are calculated using Good Maps, which estimates length of travel time based on model or travel and time of day. One-way travel times include walk times to bus stops.

Crime: Rates of violent and property crime in Lackawanna are from the U.S. Bureau of Justice, as reported by the Lackawanna Police Department. Rates reflect the number of reported index offenses per 100,000 population. These figures do not capture all violent and property crime. Violent crime includes murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Property crime rates include burglary, larceny and motor vehicle theft. Rates are reported annually but reported at 5 year intervals, with the exception of 2012, the latest year for which this data were available.

Juvenile arrest numbers are from the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Statistics and captures offenses by those under the age of 16. These include all index crimes described earlier and reported for adults as well as arson, criminal use of marijuana, possession of weapons, criminal mischief and assault.

1.4 Landscape of Human Services

Human services organizations typically provide food to the hungry, jobs training to unemployed adults, shelter to the homeless, youth development to children at risk, recovery to those affected by disaster, and assistance to victims of crime. The listing shown includes human services organizations as well as those that may not be officially classified as human services organizations but have been identified as providing critical services to vulnerable populations.

The analysis draws upon organizational data compiled by the Mobile Safety-Net Team and supplemented by information from Reference USA's 2012 Business Database. Both nonprofits and governmental agencies are included.

Only organizations with operational sites within Lackawanna are included in this listing for the purpose of analyzing what supports residents have physical access to within the community. Organizations with sites outside the town are not included on this list, even if they offer services to many residents.

Organizations providing services to target populations such as veterans, teen parents, seniors and the homeless are those whose organizational mission it is to connect with these particular populations (such as the services for seniors offered by the Senior Citizens Complex). Alternatively, they may have significant programming for these populations.

Service categories are defined as follows:

Food – includes food pantries as well as organizations providing on-site meals to residents such as at school or through a senior lunch program.

Clothing – includes clothes closets and sites where free or low-cost clothing is available, including used clothing/furniture stores such as the Salvation Army and AmVets, where these exist in the community.

Education/Training – includes places of formal education and early childhood education as well as sites for job training, GED, literacy skills, community/continuing education, and parenting training. Includes organizations offering support services such as tutoring, computer classes and job assistance provided at the library.

Sites for workforce development and vocational education are included, even if these are one of other programs offered by an agency. Education and training programs for selected population are included as well, such as those offered for individuals with disabilities.

Affordable Housing – subsidized housing and other non-market rate homes and rental units available to lower-income populations. Also included are sites providing access to supports such as loans for housing rehabilitation or emergency repairs.

Transportation – includes organizations that offer transportation via buses, vans and shuttles, as part of the suite of services they regularly provide (such as the school district and Department of Senior Services). Also includes agencies that offer transportation supports such as bus tokens.

Mental Health/Addictions - includes sites providing mental health treatment including counseling and addictions support groups. Covers out-patient and residential programs. Does not include organizations that only serve as a source of information for mental health services.

Health/Wellness – includes sites and organizations offering health services, preventive medical exams and/or screening, particularly for lower-income or vulnerable populations. Health services may be central to the mission (as with Catholic Health) or one of a larger number of services provided. Does not include organizations that only serve as a source of medical/health insurance information. Nor does this category include programs providing primarily fitness or recreational benefits.

Legal - includes legal assistance for low-income populations, especially assistance in obtaining benefits. Includes such assistance for limited populations only such as seniors or the disabled.

Youth Programs - includes providers of after-school programs and activities for school-age youth. Also included are mentoring programs. This category does not include programming provided as part of a residential treatment program for youth. Nor does it include programs providing only information about youth programs.

Financial literacy - includes financial literacy training and budget counseling services.

Crime/Juvenile – includes crime prevention programs, juvenile justice, and victim assistance programs.

Information/Referral - includes agencies, programs and positions providing information and referral to a wide variety of human support services for individuals and families.

Providers are classified as governmental if they are an arm of a local, state or federal level agency or department.

Most employment figures used to map human services organizations by employment size come from Reference USA's 2012 Business Database providing the number of employees an organization or agency has working at a particular site.

Appendix B - Resident Questionnaire

MOBILE SAFETY-NET TEAM COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your answers will assist us in better understanding the needs in the community and help us build a stronger safety net that more readily connects residents to the human services they need. Please select one response unless indicated otherwise. **Your answers will remain completely confidential.**

Age _____ Gender (M/F) _____ Zip Code _____ Location _____

Including yourself, how many people are in your household?

- Adults (18 and older) _____
- Children (under 18) _____

Has anyone in your household ever served in the armed forces?

- Yes¹
- No²

Are there any urgent concerns or special needs that you or someone in your household might have?

- Utility shut-off notice¹
- Foreclosure / eviction²
- Homelessness³
- No money for food⁴
- Domestic violence⁵
- No urgent concerns⁶
- Other: _____⁷

Has anyone in your household ever encountered any difficulty in getting necessary services they need (such as assistance with food, housing, utilities, medical care, etc.)?

- Yes¹
- No²

If you marked "yes", please describe what barriers were faced:

- Traveling to get services is difficult¹
- I don't speak / read English well²
- I can't get there during the hours the agency is open³
- I've been turned away because of income limits⁴
- It can be physically difficult for me to leave my home⁵
- It's too much of a hassle because the process is confusing⁶
- Other: _____⁷

What is your current employment status? (select all that apply)

- Employed full-time¹
- Employed part-time²
- Unemployed, looking³
- Unemployed, not looking⁴
- Student⁵
- Retired⁶
- Disabled⁷
- Other: _____⁸

What is the current employment status of other adults in your household? (select all that apply)

- Employed full-time¹
- Employed part-time²
- Unemployed, looking³
- Unemployed, not looking⁴
- Student⁵
- Retired⁶
- Disabled⁷
- Not Applicable / No other adults in household⁸
- Other: _____⁹

What is your current living situation?

- Own¹
- Rent, with assistance²
- Rent, without assistance³
- Staying with friend / family⁴
- Homeless⁵
- Other: _____⁶

How long have you lived at your current address?

- Less than 3 mos.¹
- 3 mos. – 1 year²
- 1-5 years³
- 6 - 10 years⁴
- More than 10 years⁵

What is the highest level of education/training you've completed?

- High School / GED¹
- Some College²
- College Degree (2-yr or 4-yr)³
- Post-graduate degree⁴
- Military⁵
- Trade School⁶
- Did not finish high school⁷

What are your household's sources of income? (Select all that apply)

- Employment¹
- Unemployment insurance²
- Public assistance³
- Social Security⁴
- Pension⁵
- Disability⁶
- Worker's compensation⁷
- Child Support⁸
- No Income⁹
- Other: _____¹⁰

How much money is currently received from these sources to support your household each month (net income)?

What is your primary form of transportation?

- Bicycle¹
- Family / Friends²
- Own vehicle³
- Taxi⁴
- Public Transportation⁵
- Walk⁶
- Car Share Service⁷
- Other: _____⁸

If you don't own a vehicle and are not a regular public transit user, why don't you use public transit more often?

- Too expensive¹
- Takes too long to get places²
- No service to where I need to go³
- No evening or weekend service⁴
- Buses don't run often enough⁵
- It's too long to walk to bus stop⁶
- Service isn't reliable⁷
- I don't feel safe⁸
- Schedule is too confusing⁹
- Other (please specify): _____¹⁰

Does anyone in your household lack health insurance? (select all that apply)

- Yes, one or more adults do not have health insurance¹
- Yes, one or more children do not have health insurance²
- No, we all have health insurance³

If insured, select the type of health insurance currently used by members of your household (please select all that apply):

- Private insurance¹
- Managed care (HMO, PPO)²
- Medicare (65+, disabled)³
- Medicaid⁴
- Government (VA, Child Health Plus, Family Health Plus)⁵
- Health Savings Account⁶
- Other: _____⁷
- Do not know/Unsure⁸
- Do not have health insurance⁹

Are you, or is anyone in your household currently receiving any of the following forms of public assistance?

- Food stamps¹
- Medicaid²
- Cash benefits³
- HEAP⁴
- SSI / SSD⁵
- WIC⁶
- Other _____⁷
- None⁸

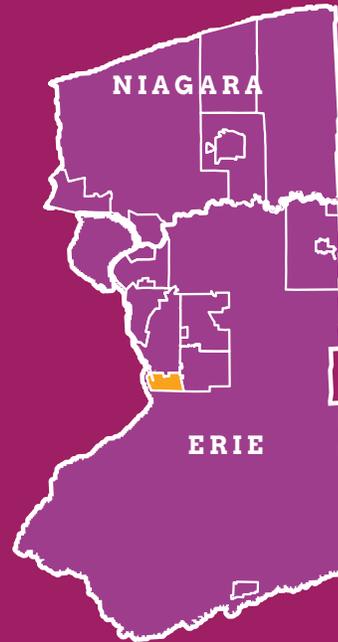
Does anyone in your household have a pending application for any of the following?

- Food stamps¹
- Medicaid²
- Cash benefits³
- HEAP⁴
- SSI / SSD⁵
- WIC⁶
- Other _____⁷
- None⁸

If you have an immediate need and would like someone to call you for assistance, please write your name and phone number on the back of this survey and a member of our team can contact you. Thank you!

A COMMUNITY REPORT
City of **Lackawanna**

This is a collaborative effort of the **University at Buffalo Regional Institute** and the **Mobile Safety-Net Team** established by **The John R. Oishei Foundation**. Commissioned by The John R. Oishei Foundation this assessment presents a detailed analysis of Lackawanna's human services needs, key resources, barriers, and opportunities for strengthening the system, and in turn, residents. The insights and recommendations provided are intended to assist the foundation community, human services providers and other stakeholders in closing gaps and developing comprehensive, efficient and cost-effective strategies for connecting with a greater number of economically vulnerable individuals and families.



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