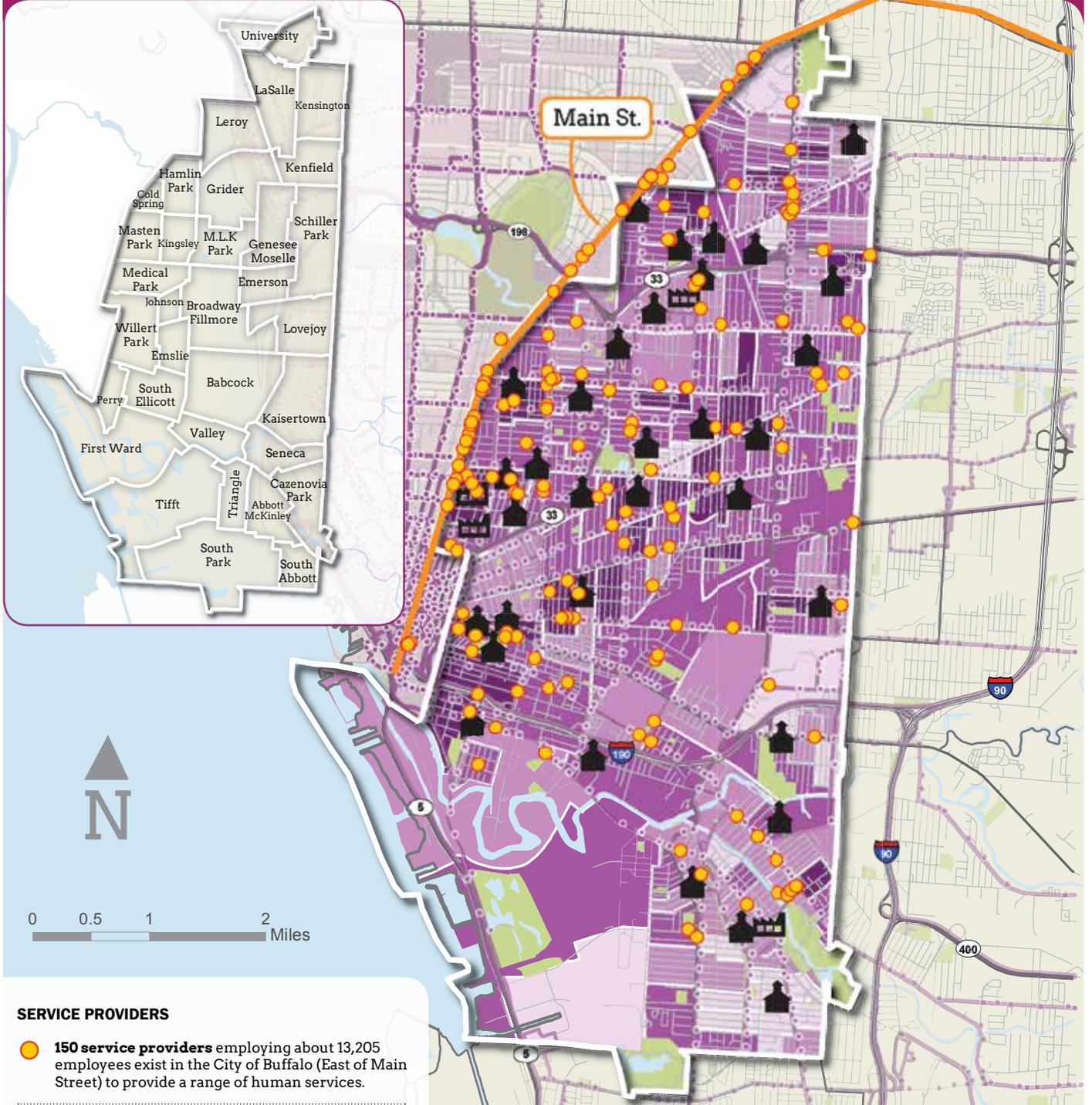


# STRENGTHENING WNY's Safety Net

## A COMMUNITY REPORT City of **BUFFALO** (East of Main Street)



Report prepared for  
The John R. Oishei Foundation  
by the University at Buffalo  
Regional Institute  
February 2014

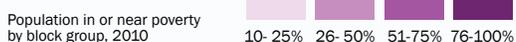


### SERVICE PROVIDERS

**150 service providers** employing about 13,205 employees exist in the City of Buffalo (East of Main Street) to provide a range of human services.

### POPULATION IN OR NEAR POVERTY

Over 78,809 residents live on incomes under or near the federal poverty level



**SCHOOLS**   
**Buffalo City School District (East of Main Street):**  
 29 elementary and middle schools  
 3 high schools  
 about 18,000 students

**TOP 3 EMPLOYERS** 

Buffalo General Hospital  
 Roswell Park Cancer Institute  
 Erie County Medical Center

**TRANSPORTATION**

**NFTA BUS ROUTES & STOPS**

# About This Report

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## Background

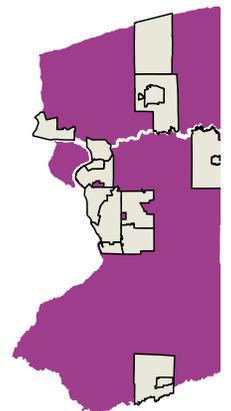
Between 2008 and 2009, regional employers shed almost 20,000 net jobs. The economic downturn, which continued into 2010, left large numbers of residents unemployed and unable to find new work for the first time in their lives. High levels of unemployment continue today. One out of 12 residents across the region seeks work, and need for support continues to escalate.

While the majority of those in poverty live in urban areas like Buffalo and Niagara Falls, families in the region's suburbs have experienced the biggest increase in poverty. One out of three with incomes below poverty now 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, all services providers are being 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 two 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 foundations and communities in strengthening the safety net of services. The eastern half of the City of Buffalo (hereinafter "Buffalo (East of Main Street)") is one of the 12 communities selected. (The western half of the city was assessed in a separate report.) 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** and are intended to spur thought in the community about opportunities to create a stronger human services safety-net.



## What Went Into This Report

### Two Teams

This effort culminates months of research in 2013 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 the community  
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

414 surveys were completed by residents in Buffalo (East of Main Street) 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

Six focus groups with residents were conducted to gather insights into their most pressing concerns, barriers to accessing services and insights on how the system might be improved.

#### Agencies



#### Agency Interviews

Over a dozen human service agency representatives shared information on their programs and perspectives on opportunities.



#### Agency Focus Groups

Eighteen representatives of nonprofit human services providers in the community took part in a focus 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...

People



Places



Services



...which resulted in:

Insights &  
Recommendations



# STRENGTHENING WNY's Safety Net

## A COMMUNITY REPORT City of **BUFFALO** (East of Main Street)



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

Of the population of 145,989 in the City of Buffalo (East of Main Street)...

...about	...an additional	...about
<b>43,105</b>	<b>35,705</b>	<b>78,809</b>
residents live in poverty or on incomes under the federal poverty level.	aren't in poverty but are close to it with incomes between 100-200% of poverty.	are doing poorly or struggling financially. This is more than one out of every two in the community.

**Beyond poverty, other alarming indicators and trends...**

**Economic vulnerability is widespread** with deepest pockets existing in the Broadway-Fillmore, Masten and Kensington neighborhoods where in some tracts, close to half of the families live in poverty. Only 2 out of 45 census tracts have poverty levels on par with or lower Erie County's; both are in South Buffalo.

**45% OF CHILDREN are in poverty**

**Teen pregnancy and fragile young families are concerns.** About one in ten births are to a teen mother between the ages of 15 and 19. Teen birth rates are especially high in zip code 14215, and two-thirds of all births in the community are to unmarried parents, the majority living in poverty. Children are disproportionately impacted, with 45% living in poverty.

**Fewer Residents in Higher-Paying Jobs**



**Residents are not connecting with the better jobs.** Of the 23,100+ higher-paying jobs existing in the community, only a small fraction—one out of ten—are held by residents in Buffalo (East of Main Street). As a result, median incomes are about half the county average (\$28,100 vs. \$48,800).

**Over the past three years, more than 3,000 students have dropped out of the Buffalo City School District;** at East High School only about 28% of students graduate.

**URGENT CONCERNS**  
**2 OUT OF 5**

**Housing is the number one urgent concern.** One out of four vulnerable residents face a crisis such as homelessness, risk of foreclosure or eviction; Many homes have been abandoned, with up to a fifth vacant in some neighborhoods.

**NEARLY 1 OUT OF 4 VULNERABLE RESIDENTS FACE A HOUSING CRISIS**

**There are desperate needs for additional high-quality food supports. Not having enough money for food is the second most common urgent concern** of those at risk. It's a situation that could worsen with recent cuts to SNAP allocations. With no cash or credit, residents describe how some pay much more than typical grocery store charges for food to make purchases from a mobile vendor that accepts food stamps on credit.

## Landscape of human services providers...

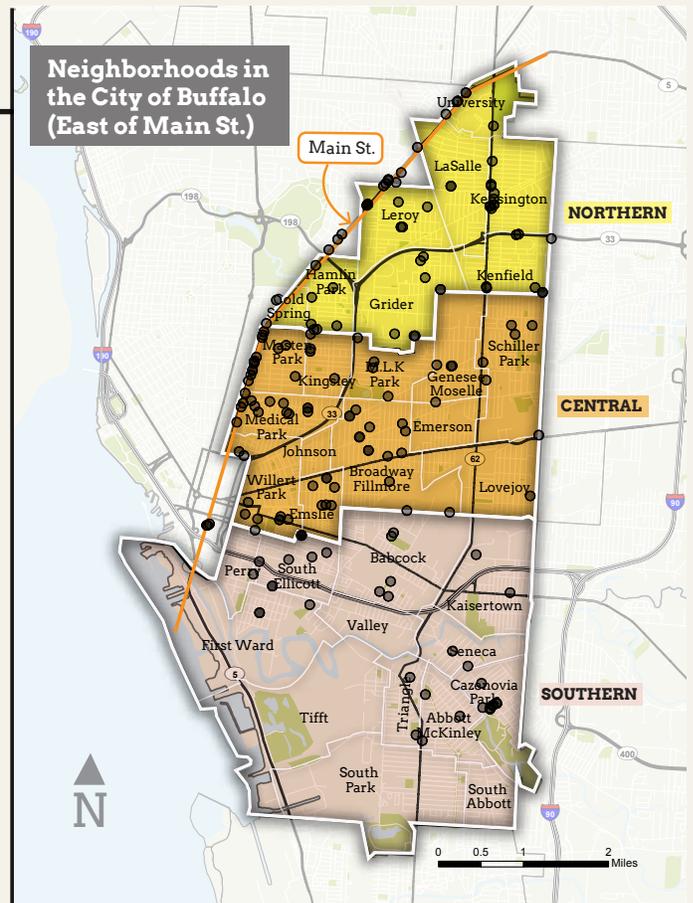
For purposes of mapping the landscape of providers, the community is divided into three sections reflecting **northern**, **central** and **southern** neighborhoods, respectively.

**150** public and private providers employing about **13,205** exist across the community to provide a range

of human services to residents, from food, education, job training, youth programs, veteran services and more.

Providers are concentrated along Main Street and in northern and central neighborhoods where poverty rates are highest.

The community's public schools and the Veterans Health Administration are the largest providers in the community.

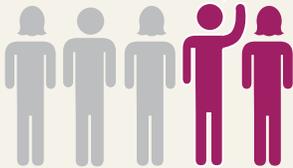


Strengths of the system include **strengths** a larger number of human services providers than in any other community; the presence of many educational institutions; the existence of several hospitals, including ECMC, a public benefit agency; the proximity of Cheektowaga, a neighbor and potential partner with shared concerns; and an increasing number of foreign-born individuals, a source of population growth and diversity.

Gaps in services exist for youth programs during after-school hours; **gaps** health services, especially primary and mental health care; language and other supports for a growing foreign-born population; affordable home repair and maintenance services, especially for seniors; safe and affordable rental housing for vulnerable adults; and a framework that facilitates greater collaboration and holistic solutions by providers.

# Barriers and systemic challenges...

2 out of 5 residents surveyed say they have encountered difficulty getting services.



**Residents' low educational attainment levels limit access to better-paying jobs.** Over half of adults (54%) have no education or formal skills training beyond high school. Among the vulnerable, fewer than 1% have vocational training offering access to career paths to good jobs for those who aren't college bound.

**The Buffalo City School District is the third lowest-performing district in the state,** creating direct barriers to educational achievement and the community's capacity to attract new residents. Only ten out of 52 schools within the district are in good standing, according to district leaders.

17,800

adults age 25+ have not graduated high school

**Traveling barriers are the most common hurdle to programs and services reported by residents surveyed.** About two out of three rely on public transit and alternative modes of travel. Nearly half of workers in Erie County who use the bus live in this community. Making matters worse is that residents tend not to compete well for higher-paying jobs within the community, necessitating travel to outside communities or a low-paying job within it.

**Low employment levels create barriers to credit, preventing home investments and repairs.** Lack of credit access also creates barriers to affordable groceries for cash-poor families dependent on food stamps.

While the community has more providers than any other, **sufficient high-quality, effective services in areas most likely to move families from poverty to economic health (education and housing) are lacking.**

**Mental illness is often at the root of homelessness and other poverty-related challenges, providers say, yet many mental health resources, both in the community and regionally, have been cut.**

**Confusing application processes also create barriers for residents** and were, in fact, the second most common kind of barriers reported by vulnerable households.

Only 10 of 52 Buffalo Public Schools are in good standing

**One in five households has an adult lacking health insurance,** further increasing barriers to good health and work readiness fostered by provider shortages for the underserved in this community.

19,250 households without a vehicle

**High levels of reported crime, which is fostered by poor academic performance and high school drop-outs, creates barriers to growth and investments,** while weighing on public health needs. Meanwhile having an offender status creates additional job barriers for some residents.

While two-thirds of Erie County's black population live in this community, few tracts are racially mixed. Rather, individuals tend to live in tracts where others of their same race and color account for the large majority. **This residential segregation pattern may perpetuate poverty by reducing the market for housing.**

1,422 violent crimes during the first 6 months of 2013

**With about 10 miles between northern and southern edges of the community, geographic distance and the existence of distinct neighborhoods fosters silos and hinders collaboration among the community's many providers.** These barriers, coupled with transportation difficulties, may be why some residents are unwilling to leave their neighborhood to seek services.

**Lack of English fluency creates barriers to information, programs and services for the community's growing foreign-born population.**

**State and local policy limits more constructive uses of vacant land.** For instance, while the city has a homestead program allowing the purchase of vacant property for a dollar, it does not apply to adjacent homeowners who wish to purchase the land to prevent crime or dumping, or to use the land for gardening.

In over a dozen tracts, **the median home is valued at one-third or less than the average home across Erie County,** making it difficult for homeowners to move to a better community where they and their children might rise out of poverty with healthier homes, more effective schools, and safer streets.

Providers say that **red-lining by banks and insurers reduces homeowner's ability to get loans** and invest in their homes.

**Generational poverty and the breakdown of family limits the number of role models youth see, especially boys,** in this community where two-thirds of families in poverty are single mothers with children.

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

RECOMMENDATION	STRATEGIES	MODEL TO CONSIDER
Unite human services providers through the establishment of a human services coalition	<p>Create three place-based councils representing the range of human services interests in the north, central and south neighborhoods; meet regularly to share information, advocate for common interests and fill gaps through collaboration</p> <p>Engage council representatives and others in regional solutions to address pressing regional human services challenges</p>	<p>The Seattle Human Services Coalition is an example of a long-standing group that has successfully garnered additional funding. <a href="http://shscoalition.org/">http://shscoalition.org/</a></p>
Strengthen existing information and referral resources	<p>Build upon what's available (WNY211 and Arounja.com) to create a comprehensive, user-friendly, affordable and readily updated information tool that is responsive to the needs of providers and residents</p> <p>Build information and referral capacities of churches, pastors, block clubs, and others to connect with those in need</p> <p>Expand single stops at food pantries, libraries and schools</p>	<p>San Francisco Public Library is extending its reach to the city's homeless and other vulnerable by providing information and referrals made possible through partnerships and a staff social worker. <a href="http://kalw.org/post/helping-homeless-sf-public-library">http://kalw.org/post/helping-homeless-sf-public-library</a></p>
Lift skill and educational levels of residents while strengthening work-enabling supports	<p>Ensure that every child who is not college bound has access to a quality vocational program</p> <p>Raise awareness and capacity for options under No Child Left Behind</p> <p>Expand links between GED and college programs and strengthen bridges between local employers, jobs and residents</p> <p>Bolster ESL and other supports for the foreign-born</p>	<p>Civicrops Academy, a charter school in Oakland gives older teens and young adults who have dropped out of high school a second chance to earn a high school diploma and train for a job. <a href="http://www.cvicorps.org/academy/#field">http://www.cvicorps.org/academy/#field</a></p>
Bolster supports for home-owning seniors as safe and affordable rental housing	<p>Strengthen information tools available to tenants and landlords and raise awareness of existing supports</p> <p>Engage federal leaders in advocating for section 8 policies that benefit residents and neighborhoods</p> <p>Explore opportunities for faith-based providers to strengthen supports for home-owning seniors and others</p>	<p>The Isaiah 61 Project in Niagara Falls rehabilitates vacant housing into affordable homes for low-income buyers while training adults for careers in construction. <a href="http://isaiah61niagarafalls.org">http://isaiah61niagarafalls.org</a></p>
Strengthen the safety-net for affordable and healthy food	<p>Expand mobile food markets in areas that are food deserts</p> <p>Promote individual and community-based gardens</p> <p>Impose greater regulation of food outlets that accept SNAP on credit, in violation of federal rules</p> <p>Offer incentives for corner stores to sell healthier foods</p>	<p>The Massachusetts Avenue Project on the West Side of Buffalo is increasing fresh and affordable food in low-income areas. <a href="http://mass-ave.org/">http://mass-ave.org/</a></p>
Strengthen supports for mental health promotion and intervention	<p>Promote prevention and early screening of children</p> <p>Expand church-provider partnerships to reach residents with information, referrals and supports</p> <p>Strengthen opportunities for peer and neighborhood support for those in need</p>	<p>The Cheektowaga Police Department has partnered with Crisis Services to train all officers on how to better respond to calls involving a mental health need. <a href="http://www.tocny.org/departments/police.aspx">http://www.tocny.org/departments/police.aspx</a></p>
Strengthen supports for youth and exposure to crime and violence	<p>Partner to fill gaps in age appropriate out-of-school programming for youth</p> <p>Expand and strengthen block groups to reduce crime</p> <p>Expand home-based parenting support and increase opportunities for mentoring, especially through initiatives like the Buffalo Peacemakers Gang Intervention Program</p>	<p>Big Brothers Big Sisters was identified in a report by the U.S. Dept. of Justice as an effective strategy against drug use by youth (along with its other positive outcomes). <a href="http://www.beafriend.org/">http://www.beafriend.org/</a></p>
Reduce mass concentrations of poverty through revitalization and job growth	<p>Explore and aggressively address allegations of red-lining</p> <p>Foster entrepreneurship through partnerships with university-based programs</p> <p>Unite and grow businesses through business districts</p> <p>Leverage anchor institutions and community strengths</p>	<p>Buffalo's Elmwood Village is a hub for businesses and a thriving community for residents. Yet it wasn't always this way. <a href="http://www.elmwoodvillage.org">http://www.elmwoodvillage.org</a></p>

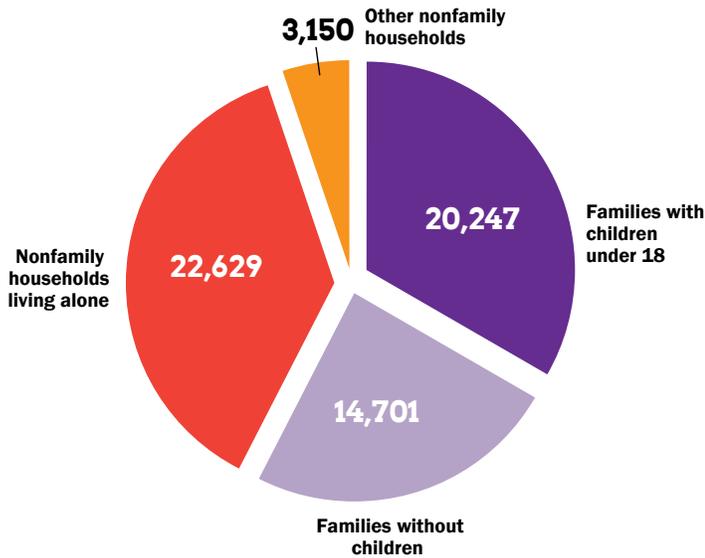
Context for Action

# People in Need

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

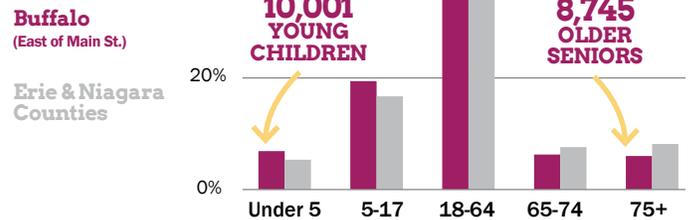


## Households by Type, 2011



Source: 2007-11 American Community Survey

## Population by Age, 2011



## Potentially At-Risk Populations, 2011

Non-white	87,561
Adults with HS education or less	49,057
Single parents	14,239
Veterans	10,090
Age 65+ living alone	6,756
Foreign-born individuals	6,475

Source: 2007-11 American Community Survey

## Individuals and Families

The City of Buffalo (East of Main Street) has a population of about 145,900 individuals across 60,725 households. It represents slightly over half (56%) of the city's total population (which stands at almost 264,000).

What distinguishes this community from many others in the region is that it is largely black. Whites, at 40% of total individuals, are a minority and are primarily concentrated in South Buffalo.

While the latest census data show a relatively small foreign-born population, human services providers describe a recent influx, spurred in part by rising rental housing prices on the West Side.

With a larger proportion of children than the county as a whole, families predominate across Buffalo (East of Main Street). One out of three households has children under the age of 18 (compared to slightly over a quarter of Erie County households). At the same time, there is also a relatively large population of nonfamily households who

are living alone, bearing the cost of housing and transportation on a single income at most.

Only 6,756 of these households are seniors. Indeed, Buffalo (East of Main Street) has a proportionally smaller senior population than Erie County. Just slightly more than a tenth of the population is age 65 or up, compared to nearly a fifth in some other communities across the region like Cheektowaga and Tonawanda.

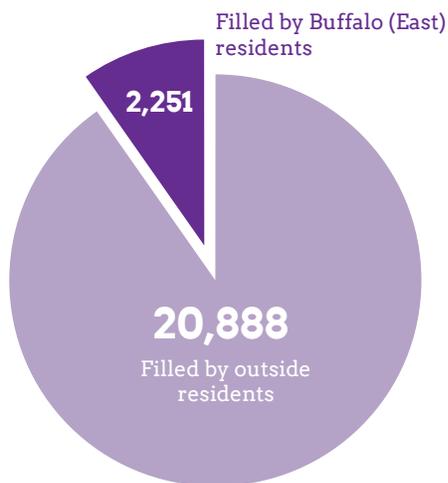
Meanwhile, children under age 18 comprise a quarter of the population, and the large majority of families with children - seven out of ten - are single parents, an indicator of the breakdown of family, mentioned by many residents who participated in focus groups.

With over half of all adults in prime child bearing years (18 to 44) having nothing more than a high school diploma, low education levels put these families at risk. Indeed, across Buffalo (East of Main Street), many adults have nothing more than a high school diploma, at most, compromising their ability to compete for jobs in a region that produces thousands of new college graduates each year. Veterans represent another sizable group of potentially at-risk residents due to their unique health, retraining and other needs.

**About two out of three black individuals in Erie County live in Buffalo, east of Main Street.**

Source: 2007-11 American Community Survey

### Higher-paying jobs filled by Buffalo (East of Main Street) Residents, 2011



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application, reflecting 2011 data

### Top 10 Employers in Buffalo (East of Main Street)

Employer	# of Employees
Buffalo General Hospital	4,000
Roswell Park Cancer Institute	3,300
Erie County Medical Center (ECMC)	2,300
Mercy Hospital Of Buffalo	1,863
Buffalo Public Schools	1,755
VA Western NY Healthcare System	1,689
First Niagara Bank	1,200
University At Buffalo - Main Street Campus	1,000
Sisters of Charity Hospital	1,000
Heritage Centers	950

Source: Reference USA, New York State Education Department, and Buffalo Business First Book of Lists 2011; Employment for Buffalo Public Schools reflects that for schools located in Buffalo (East)

## Work and Income

About 53,220 jobs exist in Buffalo (East of Main Street). This is slightly more than one job for every worker in the community. Yet most residents who work find employment outside the community. When they do, it's generally in lower paying jobs. In fact, residents fill only about 2,250 of the 23,140 higher-paying jobs that exist in Buffalo (East of Main Street). Positions paying \$40,000 or more are considered higher paying for purposes of this analysis. Considering both workers who stay and those who leave, only a quarter of the total from this community earns at least \$40,000, which is the mean annual wage across the nation.

**Residents fill just one out of ten higher-wage jobs in the community**

An education and skills mismatch may be part of the problem. Health care and manufacturing are sectors offering jobs paying at least a living wage and offering career paths. Moreover, these are sectors that have been growing or where demand for workers is anticipated to increase. These two lines (with health care including social assistance) account for nearly half of all jobs in the community. Indeed, with major regional forces like ECMC, Roswell Park Cancer Institute and Buffalo General Hospital, health care

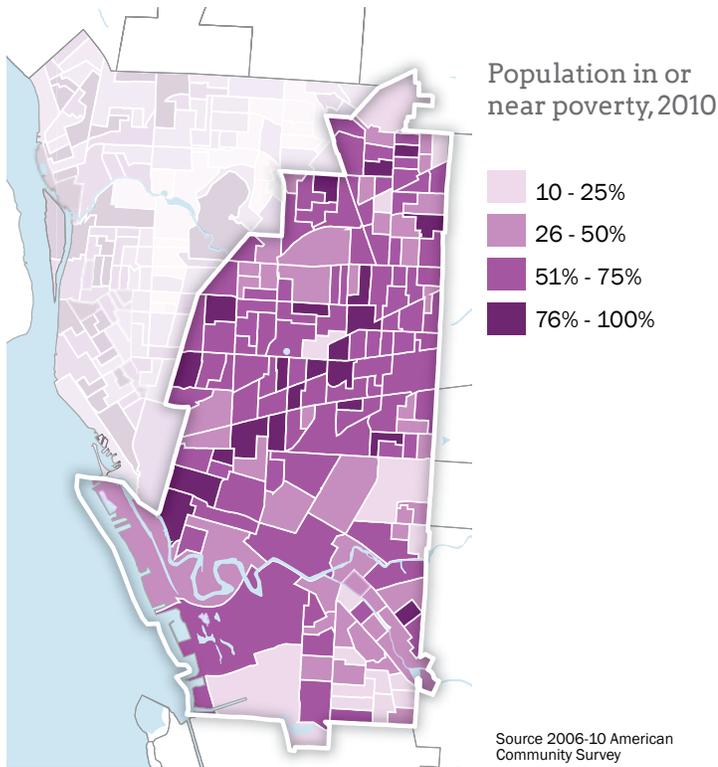
providers account for 6 out of the 10 largest employers. Yet among residents who work, only about 30% hold jobs in these sectors, which generally require higher education or vocational training.

As a consequence of this and other barriers to gainful employment, household income levels in the community are heavily skewed toward the low end. Nearly half of all households lives on \$25,000 a year, at most, compared to a quarter of households across the county. Few high earners live in the eastern portion of Buffalo, which also has a smaller "middle class." Median incomes are over \$20,000 less than the county median (\$28,099 vs. \$48,805). Crime, poorly performing public schools, and low home values may all act to disinterest mid and higher-income families from living in the community.

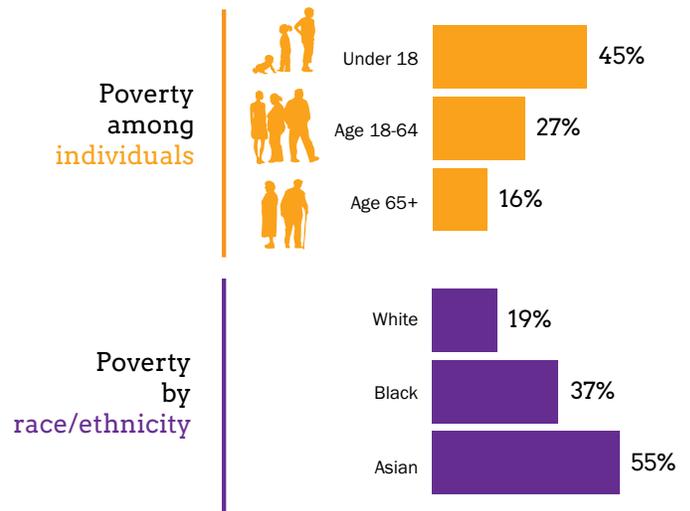
### % Households by Income Levels

	Buffalo (East of Main St.)	Erie County
\$0 - \$25K	44%	26%
\$25K - \$100K	48%	55%
\$100K+	7%	19%

Source: 2007-11 American Community Survey



Population in Poverty by Age and Family Type, 2011



## Poverty

Over 43,100 individuals live on incomes below the poverty line. Poverty rates are highest among children (45%), working age adults (27%) and lowest among seniors (16%). An additional 35,700 individuals are not in poverty but near it, meaning that altogether over half of residents (56%) are doing poorly or struggling economically. The situation is worse than any other community assessed, including Niagara Falls (where 44% are in or near poverty) and west of Main Street in Buffalo where the percentage stands just slightly lower at 51%.

The central portion of the community - south of E. Delavan Avenue and north of South Park Ave - are most poverty stricken. In the Broadway-Fillmore, Perry and Masten areas, close to three-quarters of residents live on income under 200% of the federal poverty level. There are only two census tracts in the entire community where poverty is on par or lower than the county average. Both are near parkland in South Buffalo near the eastern border. Across South Buffalo, about four out of ten are in poverty or at risk. This is better than the community as a whole but worse than Erie County.

Children are most impacted. Nearly half (45%) under the age of 18 live in poverty, likely lacking access to adequate levels of basic resources such as food and safe housing needed for normal development during the most formative years. In addition to lacking financial resources, most young children in the community also lack two parents who are consistently present in their lives. The most recent Department of Health data show that about 70% of births in the Zip Codes comprising this community are to unwed mothers,

including teens, which only recently began receiving comprehensive sex education through Buffalo Public Schools last year. This comes at a time when Head Start slots are being cut and services for youth have been diminished due to funding.

Need also varies greatly by race and ethnicity with the black and Asian populations experiencing higher levels of poverty, with rates that are close to double or more poverty rates for whites. Across families, single mothers with children account for two-thirds of families in poverty.

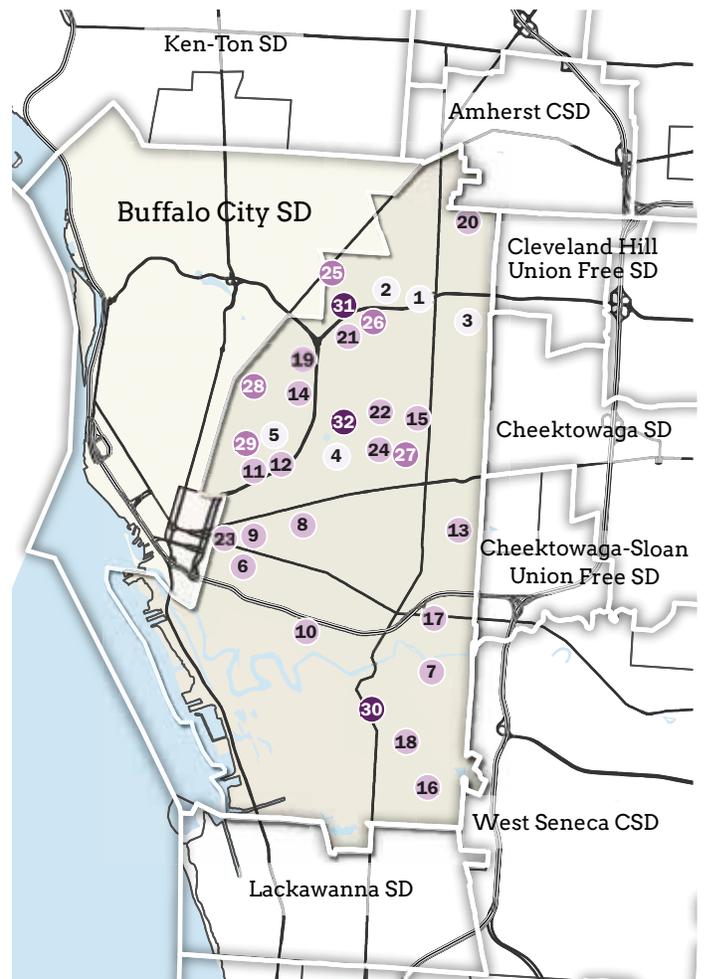
**\$12.00** Amount a family of three pays for a single round trip by bus within the city without any transfers

**\$17.84** Maximum daily amount a family of three lives on at the federal poverty level

**\$20.00** Daily cost of owning and operating a car

Source: Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, 2013 Federal Poverty Guidelines, and Edmunds.com

	Schools in the City of Buffalo District (West of Main St.)	Enrollment, 2012	% Qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch
<b>ELEMENTARY</b>			
1	PS 54 Dr. George Blackman School of Excellence	482	85%
2	PS 61 Early Childhood Center	291	98%
3	PS 82 Early Childhood Center	465	95%
4	PS 90 Dr. Charles Drew Science Magnet	351	94%
5	PS 99 Stanley M. Makowski ECC	807	96%
<b>ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE</b>			
6	PS 6 Buffalo Elementary School of Technology	568	89%
7	PS 27 Hillery Park	567	82%
8	PS 31 Harriet Ross Tubman	516	91%
9	PS 32 Bennett Park Montessori	726	71%
10	PS 33 Bilingual Center	491	85%
11	PS 37 Futures Academy	543	96%
12	PS 39 Dr. Martin Luther King Multicultural Institute	729	90%
13	PS 43 Lovejoy Discovery	575	82%
14	PS 53 Community School	413	89%
15	PS 59 Dr. Charles Drew Science Magnet	484	25%
16	PS 67 Discovery School	565	38%
17	PS 69 Houghton Academy	513	85%
18	PS 72 Lorraine	578	81%
19	PS 74 Hamlin Park	525	82%
20	PS 80 Highgate Heights	539	90%
21	PS 89 Lydia Wright School of Excellence	800	83%
22	PS 91 Build Academy	556	97%
23	PS 93 Southside	1022	86%
24	PS 97 Harvey Austin School	392	92%
<b>ELEMENTARY through HIGH</b>			
25	Occupational Training Center	327	59%
26	PS 84 Health Care Center for Children at ECMC	13	43%
27	PS 156 Frederick Law Olmsted	554	55%
28	PS 192 Buffalo Academy for the Visual and Performing Arts	829	68%
29	PS 195 City Honors	872	27%
<b>HIGH</b>			
30	PS 206 South Park HS	762	63%
31	PS 301 Burgard	579	71%
32	PS 307 East	524	76%



Source: NYS Education Department 2011-2012 School Report Card

## Education

The 32 schools that exist in the City of Buffalo (East of Main Street) as part of the Buffalo City School District enroll approximately 18,000 students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The overwhelming majority are poor, with 77% qualifying for free and reduced price lunch. In addition to these schools, the community has ten charter schools enrolling about 4,200 students. No private schools exist in Buffalo (East of Main Street), although there are many located west of Main Street.

While the Buffalo School District has a number of supports in place to bolster students' academic success (the recently-implemented Say Yes initiative is the most notable support), the concentration of deep poverty creates barriers to academic achievement. Indeed, more children than not are falling behind, and this backsliding begins at an early age.

For instance, only a quarter of third grade students at public schools in the community met or exceeded standards in Math during the 2011-12 school year. Children at charter schools in the community perform notably better, with close to half (45%) meeting or exceeding standards in 3rd grade math.

## Highest Level of Educational Attainment of Adults Age 25+, 2007-11

	Buffalo (East of Main Street)	Erie County
Less than High School	20%	11%
High School	35%	29%
Some College/ Associate's Degree	33%	30%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	13%	30%

Source: 2007-11 American Community Survey

Only three Buffalo Public Schools across Buffalo (East of Main Street) have students perform at this level or better. These include Discovery, Lorraine Elementary and Hillery Park. At one of these schools (Discovery), the majority of students are from higher-income, not economically disadvantaged families and therefore more likely to have crucial needs, instrumental to academic achievement, met at home in the form of adequate, nutritious food, enriching activities, and a stable home environment.

While not an apples-to-apples comparison with previous years, more recent student test scores released in August 2013 paint an even more dire picture, with fewer than 10% of children meeting standards in many public schools in Buffalo. Four percent is the median across Buffalo (East of Main Street) schools in 4th grade math. Meanwhile, NYS Commissioner King describes these newer statewide standards as a more accurate gauge of the level of achievement ultimately needed for "college and career readiness." Indeed, only 10 of the 56 schools in the district are in good standing, district leaders say. Consistency is also lacking, with some schools with high-needs students performing better than others, proving that more effective education is achievable. This comparative success is largely attributable to leadership at the school level, according to district leaders.

A weak academic foundation early on sets a trajectory for poor academic performance later in life. By 2012, only 35% of students who began high school in 2008 in one of the three high schools in Buffalo (East of Main Street) graduated with a Regents or local diploma within the normal four-year period. Graduation rates at South Park were significantly higher, at 51%, than at the other two high schools, and slightly higher than the district-wide graduation rate which stood at 48% in 2012. The one charter school in Buffalo (East of Main Street) that enrolls high school students has a graduation rate of 71%, significantly higher than the district-wide average. District leaders also point to the Charter School for Applied Technology, located in Kenmore but enrolling mostly city-residing children, as highly effective.

Yet thousands across the Buffalo Public School District have dropped out in recent years. Between 2010 and 2012, the total has

been 3,023. Many others lose classroom time due to suspensions; over 10,000 short-term suspensions occurred during 2012-13.

It is against this backdrop that Say Yes was recently implemented in Buffalo. It's a landmark collaborative effort intended, ultimately, to increase postsecondary graduation rates through the promise of free college to all graduates of the Buffalo City School District as well as the supports students need to achieve academically. This includes after-school programming, tutoring, mentors, health and mental health services, legal assistance, transportation supports and more. Everything is free and the program will be fully implemented in all Buffalo schools by 2015-16.

The first free-tuition scholarships were awarded last spring. Approximately 1,250 graduates qualified and will be attending a variety of post-secondary institutions, most here in the region.

As David Rusk, executive director of the Say Yes Buffalo puts it, this initiative is intended to be a game changer. But it's a long game and will take some years before the ultimate goal of higher educational attainment levels are realized.

Today, exceptionally low educational levels contribute to high levels of economic need and vulnerability experienced by residents. Exactly 20% of adults in the community have not earned a high school diploma or equivalent, compared to 11% of all county residents. Over 50% have a high school diploma, at most. Meanwhile, only 13% are graduates of a four-year or graduate program, versus 30% of adults across Erie County who have attained this level of academic achievement. Of those children who go on to earn a bachelor's degree or higher, too few return to live in the community. Yet, as one leader observed, it's very rare to see someone get out of the neighborhood and prosper.

**10,624**  
**Student**  
**Suspensions**  
during 2012-2013

Source: June 2013 Suspension Report, Buffalo Public School District

Context for Action

# The Most Vulnerable



Demographics,  
service usage,  
urgent needs  
and barriers

## Assessing the Need

### 414 households in Buffalo (East of Main Street) 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 libraries, community centers, food pantries, churches and community events. A full listing of these sites where residents were surveyed can be found in the appendix.

## What human services are residents receiving?

Three out of four of those surveyed (76%) receive some form of human services or are living in a household that does. This percentage is lower than residents' connection with services west of Main Street but on par with Niagara Falls.

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

Food Stamps	72%
Medicaid	53%
HEAP	28%
SSI/SSD	27%
Rental Assistance	26%

64%

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

**Pending applications.** Nearly one out of five of those surveyed (17%) indicated they have an application pending for some kind of assistance. What's alarming about this figure is that reflects less than half the number saying they have an urgent need in their household. Food stamps are most commonly sought, accounting for almost a third of

pending applications. Health insurance through the state's Medicaid program accounts for 20% of applications. Yet the 22 survey takers who reported having pending applications for Medicaid, represent less than half the number who reported an adult or child in their household without health insurance (49 survey takers).

41%

of survey takers report having an urgent concern.

The most urgent concerns of those surveyed

Homelessness	
Eviction	23%
Utility Shut-off	
No money for food	15%

## Indicators of greater need?

While the majority of those surveyed have connected with services, the data suggests that not all are receiving the level of support they need to get back on their feet. Four out of ten reported having an urgent concern, and this percentage said they have encountered barriers to necessary services. Altogether, nearly half (44%) said they face a current crisis and/or barriers to the help they need.

**Urgent Concerns:** Housing-related needs dominated the

urgent concerns reported by survey takers, accounting for half of all urgent concerns reported. These included, in order of prevalence, utility shut-off notices, homelessness and the threat of foreclosure or eviction. Over half of those with immediate housing needs rent. Needs are disproportionately greater in Zip Codes 14214 and 14215, encompassing University, LaSalle, Kensington and Leroy neighborhoods.

Not having enough money for food was also frequently reported, accounting for about one-third of urgent concerns. However, only half of those who say they can't afford the food they need receive food stamps, pointing to either lack of awareness of this program or potential enrollment barriers. Urgent needs for food are disproportionately high in South Buffalo, including the Valley (Zip Codes 14210 and 14220).

**Lack of Health Insurance.** A fifth of households have one or more adults lacking insurance, a percentage that's higher than in the western half of Buffalo (13%) and surprising given the number of hospitals in the community. Children are much more likely to be insured; only 2% of survey respondents say a child lacked this benefit. The majority with insurance report being enrolled in some form of governmental insurance, primarily Medicaid and Medicare.

## What's causing this situation?

The vulnerable are highly dependent on public support programs for their basic needs for food, housing, income and insurance. A number of factors contribute to this and will create barriers to greater levels of self-sufficiency unless addressed.

# 414 surveyed

## High unemployment/low incomes:

Only a fifth work full or part time. An even smaller percentage (11%) say another adult in their household is employed. 41% are unemployed, with more than not actively looking. Less than 10% reported unemployment insurance, suggesting most have been seeking work for over a year. Disability is also notable; for every survey taker working full-time, two report being disabled.

With this employment picture, it's not surprising that household incomes are low. Seven out of ten live on less than \$1,250 monthly. \$928 is the median, a fraction of the poverty level for a household of two, the median reported.

## Low education and skill levels:

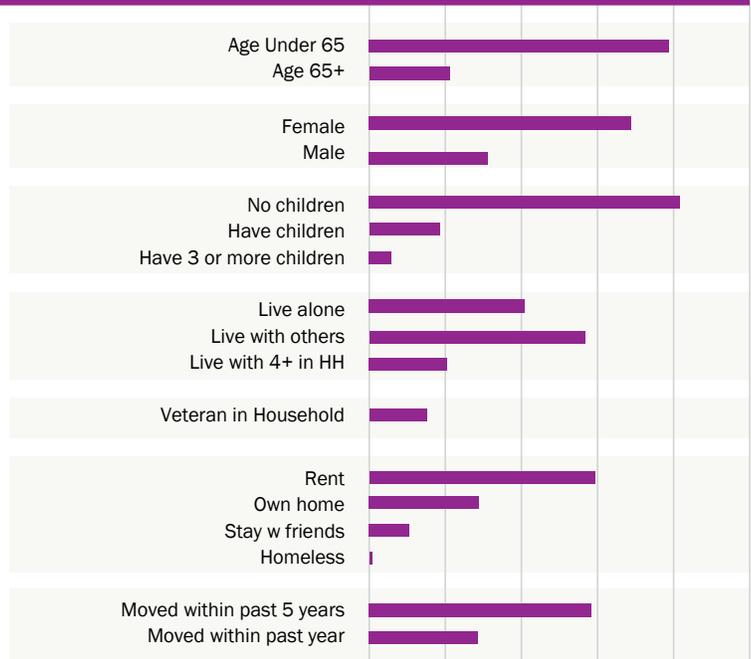
Six out of ten have no skills or training beyond high school, drastically limiting their earnings capacity in today's job market. Low levels of education may also limit residents' capacity to seek out human services, navigate application processes and effectively advocate for themselves and their families.

**Older age:** Nearly three-quarters of those surveyed are 40+; 52 is the median age, suggesting unique training needs geared toward older job seekers. This also speaks to the difficulty of engaging younger adults.

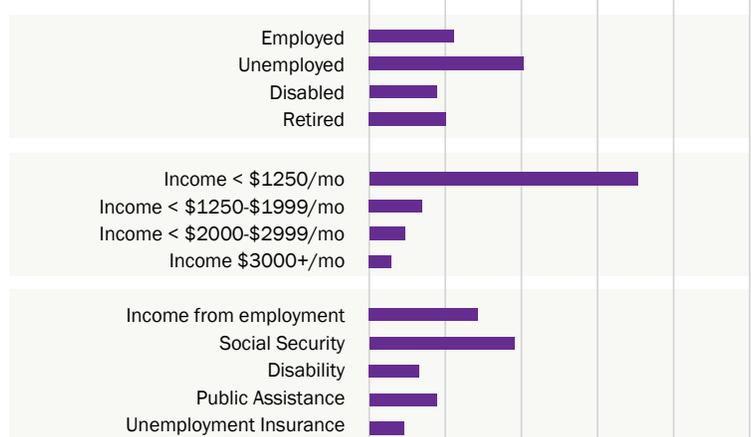
## Potentially high housing costs:

While the majority of those at risk rent (59% of survey takers), more than not rent without assistance, which is surprising given the level of poverty. It's a picture that's very different from Buffalo (West of Main Street) where the majority of renters get some assistance. This may leave renters at the mercy of landlords and what they want to charge, particularly since many (71%) are long-time residents, living where they do for more than 5 years.

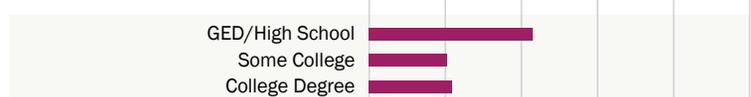
## Individuals and Families



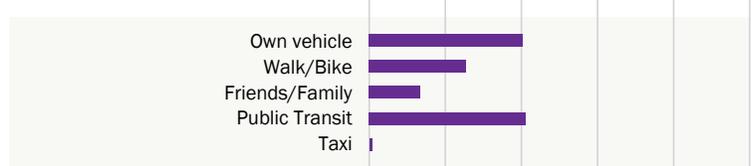
## Work and Income



## Education



## Transportation



Source: Mobile Safety-Net Team Community Needs Assessment, 2012-13

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

## Barriers Residents Face

A clear majority of the city's most vulnerable live in poverty and do not have the education and skills to climb out on their own.

Compounding this startling picture are barriers to work, training and human services. About two out of five said they have experienced difficulty getting services, a percentage that is much higher than the quarter of at-risk adults west of Main Street in Buffalo who reported barriers.

Traveling difficulties are most common, reported by 35% of those experiencing access trouble. Only four out of ten get around in a car they own. The rest rely on alternative modes, most commonly, public transportation.

Being turned away for services due to income limits is also a common barrier, reported by 32% of those with trouble getting needed services and representing, disproportionately, residents who say they are employed in some capacity or retired.

### A Voice from the Community

Confusing processes present barriers for over one in four (28%). Smaller percentages reported being unable to leave home to access services (14%), being unable to get to an agency during their hours of operation (8%) or language barriers (6%). Conversations with residents shed further light on a myriad of challenges vulnerable residents face in getting the help they need and rising out of poverty. Six conversations

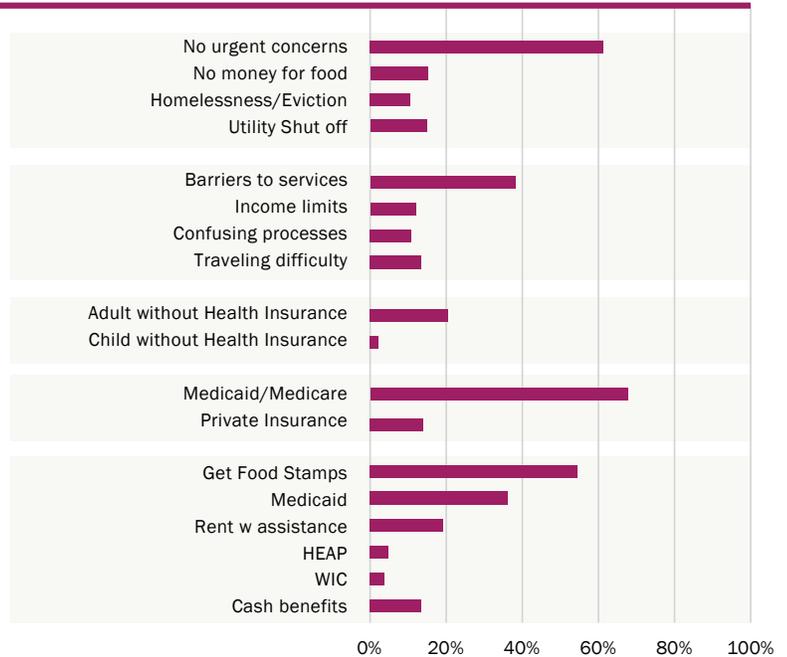
were held with parents, single adults, seniors and teens at the following five venues: Midtown Bible Church, Matt Urban HOPE Center, Friends of the Elderly, the Valley Community Center, and the Patient Voices Network of Buffalo.

**Breakdown of the family.** In two separate conversations (one with mothers and another with seniors) residents pointed to the breakdown of the family as being at the root of many challenges. Too many fathers are absent, they say. They aren't held accountable. The burden falls squarely on mothers, to provide, to advocate for and to discipline their children. Because they can't do it single-handedly, many rely on welfare, a system of support that some say only breeds dependency on the government and survival at the lowest economic rungs. The group at Friends of the Elderly

even suggested eliminating some social programs as a first step towards a solution and as a way of encouraging work, responsibility and accountability.

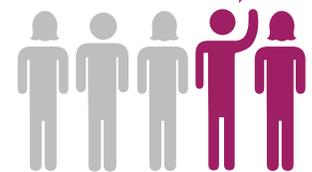
**Lack of jobs paying a living wage.** Many do not have the education to do anything other than fast food work exclaimed one focus group participant at Midtown Bible Church. Others, too, mentioned how the loss of higher-paid factory work has hurt the community. A mother at the HOPE Center described being able to find only temporary work for weeks at a time. Yet times are tight even for those with more education. *One mother from South Buffalo says she is a college graduate who is employed in a professional capacity yet she does not earn enough to cover basic needs for herself and her children.*

### Needs & Barriers



Source: Mobile Safety-Net Team Community Needs Assessment, 2012-13

**2 out of 5 residents surveyed say they have encountered difficulty getting services.**



### **Lack of affordable day care.**

Mothers in the Valley described the lack of affordable and flexible childcare as a key barrier to work, especially with DSS not taking on new cases for child care subsidies, according to the mothers.\* Logistics are another barrier, as most day cares in the area close at 5, making even a daytime job in Buffalo difficult. That said, all mothers describe the Valley Community Center as an invaluable resource for child care and other family supports, filling gaps which would otherwise exist as they do in service deserts to the north, especially between JFK, Babcock and the Valley.

**Drug dealing, addiction and dwindling resources.** Drug dealing is viewed as a line of work, an alternative to minimum wage. As one put it, earning \$7/hour on minimum wage doesn't compare to the \$17/hour you can make by selling. In another group, residents described how they know drug dealers and how they aren't bad people; they have just fallen into this line of activity that is seemingly accepted as long as it's kept relatively discrete.

Yet in a conversation with teens, all say they have witnessed people selling drugs and would know where they could get marijuana if they wanted. At the same time, mothers in the Valley describe the drug problem as "huge" and point to a death just the week prior from heroin, a substance, they say, that is cheaper and more accessible than oxycodone, a drug that's also common with many on disability and prescriptions for pain. In the meantime, valuable resources for addiction have been eliminated, including Sheehan Hospital and treatment at ECMC.

A Voice from  
the  
Community

**"I'm retired and as much money as I have, which isn't a lot, it makes me number one in my neighborhood and that shouldn't be..."**

**Crime and safety.** Most described crime as prevalent and worsening, although not always directly affecting them. As a Moselle resident put it, "It's like passing by a skunk. Sure it stinks, but it ain't bothering me." A resident from the Bailey-Walden area described needing to build up a resilience. She described viewing the aftermath of a shooting from her home with binoculars. Another mentioned how it's second nature to hear gun shots. Even two of the teens knew the 13-year old girl who was recently stabbed to death. Residents in the Valley describe how criminals have become so bold, and robberies are on the rise. Many there sense that crime is fueled by addiction.

Many described how police are doing their best and their presence has helped improve some neighborhoods, but they are simply dealing with so much. Several mentioned how block groups have also been helpful.

Nonetheless, lack of safety is a barrier in this community where the majority of vulnerable get around using alternative modes of transportation. As one put it, you know not to walk around after dark, especially if you are a woman.

All of this crime also creates a pool of adults with criminal records creating hurdles to jobs. As one said, you can't just be a drug dealer who has come clean; you'll need to have a master's degree.

**Barriers to affordable, quality rental housing.** Many mentioned the rise of out-of-town landlords from places as far away as Iran and Iraq, who purchase homes cheap, charge \$600 or so for rent and raise rents even higher for those with a Section 8 voucher. For instance, at the HOPE Center, one woman with Section 8 described paying \$900/month for a two-bedroom apartment including neither utilities nor appliances. "A roof over your head" is how housing is described; it's a step up from living on the street. The same woman also described how the overseer has changed so many times, she was once paying rent to the wrong person.

Long-time residents at Friends to the Elderly describe seeing disinvestment by both landlords and renters. Renters aren't maintaining because it's not theirs, and they can't afford to put anything into it, while landlords don't care.

Yet two residents from South Buffalo who rent property and care about the neighborhood speak of another kind of barrier, that of finding quality tenants. So many are using and selling drugs. One says her rental is empty because she is afraid of getting a bad tenant and believes she can't discriminate against anyone. Another mentioned interviewing and the use of the eviction registry as useful tools for screening, suggesting higher levels of awareness among resident landlords could be helpful.

**Misuse of food stamp money.** A concerning situation mentioned by residents at the HOPE Center was of a white food truck that sells high-priced foods on food stamp credit, contrary to what's allowable by law and what grocery stores with more affordable food can do. This creates a vicious cycle, leaving the communities' poorest families with less food stamp money the next month to spend on food in stores like Aldi's or Save-A-Lot where these dollars can be stretched the furthest.

While nobody in the other groups we conversed with used this truck, some said they have seen it in their area and provided a telephone number. When dialed, the recording simply asks callers to leave a message for delivery on the East Side and offers a different number for delivery on the West Side, Riverside or South Buffalo.

**Lack of awareness and information.** Residents in the Valley voiced the greatest need for additional information about what is available and where they can get help, especially for addiction and mental health services and job retraining programs. They said that every resident should have a directory. Having a point person to go to would be even better. As one resident at Friends of the Elderly put it, sometimes you need other people to help you figure things out because when you are overwhelmed, you can't think straight.

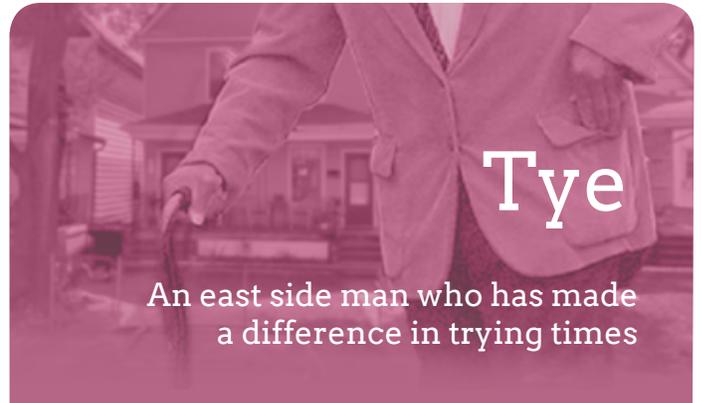
\*While the statements expressed by focus group participants reflect their perceptions of reality, these may not always be accurate.

# Voices from the Community

## Insights and perspectives from those with first-hand experience

These are stories about real people\*, individuals in Buffalo (East of Main Street) 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, 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



Tye lives a mile from Olmsted-designed MLK Park. When he and his wife purchased the home decades ago, the neighborhood was full of homeowners and children, a welcoming place for them and their five kids. Yet today, if he had to go back and do it all over again, he says he'd never buy on that street. He thinks about moving, now that the children are grown. It's more house than he needs, but it's worth only \$10,000 despite a new roof, updated electrical work and siding (a loan from the city made this possible). Tye says he purchased his home for \$8,500 about forty years ago. (Had he banked the money, he would have \$49,150 today based on inflation alone). He doesn't see options other than staying put.

### A Voice from the Community

But the crime and violence weigh heavily, even though it has improved from years ago when he and his neighbors formed a block club.

It disgusted him how taxpaying homeowners couldn't sit on the porch or walk to the store without fear of being victimized. When an entire street calls, it's more effective than a single person whose dubbed a complainer. While successful, the group was also risky. It drew attention, and his life was threatened as a result. Yet Tye was undeterred. A man of faith, he says he's had an army of angels protecting him.

Another great achievement is how he provided for his family after losing his job at Ford Motors. And it wasn't through welfare. Hardworking, he's held different jobs but he recounts the time without health insurance as particularly difficult given the health challenges in his family. He remembers walking out of a clinic, despite throbbing chest pain, when they told him he'd have to pay. There wasn't the money. What he feels worse about, though, is the care his wife got in her final years. She suffered a lot, and despite repeated promises by the hospital, they never sent a home aide.



# Fred

A man who is content despite an atypical dwelling

Fred lives where he can. Right now, it's in an abandoned home near the Buffalo Central Terminal. Similar to this architectural jewel that now stands empty, Fred's place is void of gas, electricity, water or other basics, other than the stray cats and wildlife that offer him company at home. Yet he says he has what he needs and has endured worse. I could show you the "hot spots" under nearby bridges, he says, referring to the places where he has slept and kept warm in the past.

Fred comes from a large family but some have passed on and he doesn't see the others, after a falling out. Good neighbors watch out for him, offering him food and money for the odd jobs he helps with like shoveling in the winter.

A Voice from the Community

He also collects bottles. "I saw 30 on the way in" he says brightly. He also collects social security, but he says they are removing money from his check in repayment for a fine he owes. He eats once a day, at the HOPE Center, a huge support for him and one of the reasons he says he wants to stay in the neighborhood, when more permanent housing becomes available. Fred also drinks, with neighbors and neighborhood bars quite generous to him in this regard, but he doesn't see it as problematic, not like with his father who was a drunk and violent.

To get around Fred primarily walks, as far as the Tops in West Seneca. He comments on all of the rocks under bridges and wonders how difficult it must be for mothers with strollers.

When asked how he'd like to see the community improve, he quickly says "more businesses." So many are on welfare and services, he observes.



# Liz

A young college graduate who found herself homeless

Liz has come a long way from where she was a year or two ago: unemployed, homeless, dependent on public transit and struggling with a mental illness. Well-spoken and with a two-year degree under her belt, Liz describes seeing her symptoms escalate, which just compounded the stress of work, but she says she was in denial about her need for help until they let her go at her job. With no cushion to live on, it was just a matter of time before she was evicted. She had no place to turn, not even family.

Her mom passed a few years prior to this crisis leaving her with not much more than her personal belongings. In thinking about how her symptoms had been evident from a young age even though she wasn't diagnosed until high school, Liz says her Mom did her best, but probably wasn't the best advocate, as she had her own health issues, including similar symptoms that prevented her from seeing the trouble. As for her Dad and step siblings, she never knew them until just recently after undertaking a search.

Liz credits her counselor as being instrumental in getting her connected to the two shelters on the east side where she stayed and the supportive housing she's in today. She even took me downtown to DSS, Liz says. These days she works part time, takes the bus where she needs to go, and is a strong advocate for others with mental health and other medical challenges. She wants them to know they aren't alone, as she felt during this valley. The isolation and the waits were the hardest. She also speaks of how critical it is to have one or two people to go to; they don't need to have all of the answers if they can just point you in the right direction. Knowledge is power, she says.

A Voice from the Community

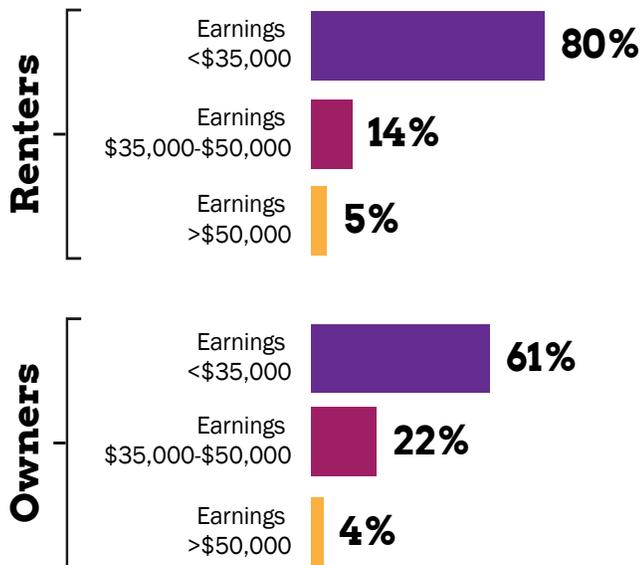
Context for Action

# Places in Need



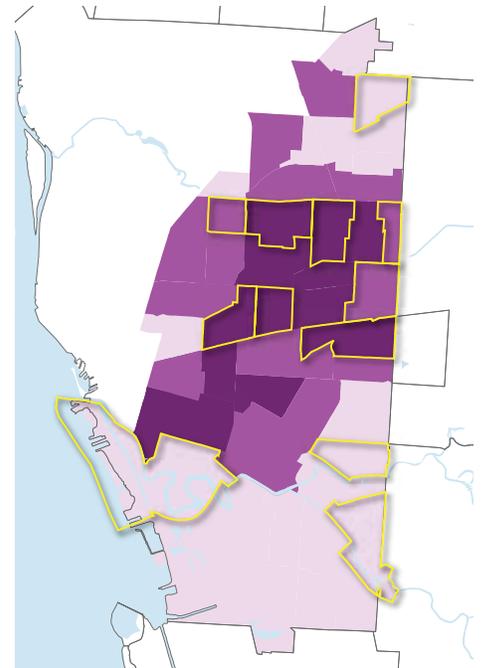
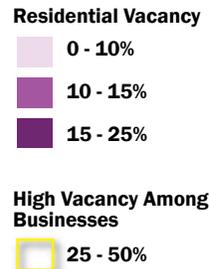
Where we live,  
how we travel  
and the safety  
levels in our  
community

Households in Buffalo (East of Main Street)  
Paying 30% or More of Their Income on  
Housing, by Income Category, 2011



Source: 2007-11 American Community Survey

Vacancy Rates  
in Buffalo  
(East of Main  
Street), 2012



Source: HUD Vacant Address Data, 2012

## Housing

About 60,725 housing units exist in Buffalo (East of Main Street). According to the latest Census data, about a fifth of housing is vacant, a percent that varies across the community and is highest in the central portion of the community.

While renters occupy slightly over half (52%) of units, the community boasts a higher percentage of homeowners than exists west of Main Street in Buffalo. A disproportionate share are seniors living on fixed incomes who, according to providers, desperately need additional supports to maintain their home and make major repairs.

Altogether, over 24,700 lower-income households - about three out of four - are cost burdened, paying more than 30% of household income in housing related costs, including the mortgage, rent, utilities and taxes. This group is predominated by renters, who pay on average just \$52 less a month than the median renter across Erie County (\$652 vs. \$704), even though both residents

**Over 24,700  
lower-income renters  
and owners are cost  
burdened, paying  
more than 30% of  
their household  
income toward  
housing**

and providers say that the quality isn't there (in addition to the prevalence of lead paint that creates health hazards, providers say, crime and poor public schools are community factors that weigh on the quality). Moreover, residents in focus groups told how landlords commonly increase rents for Section 8 holders (despite Belmont's system of checks and balances to prevent this), and how a growing number are foreign owners who have purchased cheap and are looking to make a profit. This only further limits the supply of safe and affordable housing, which homeless providers say is drastically needed in a city where 1,500 live on the street any given night.

For homeowners, lack of access to credit coupled with alleged red-lining by banks and insurers create additional barriers to home investments that were raised as concerns in a focus group with human service providers. Even residents with good credit can't get loans for repairs and investments because property values are so low. Indeed, in many tracts across the community, the majority of older homes built prior to 1939 and most in need of repair and maintenance, are valued at under \$30,000. Providers say the biggest gap, where demand far exceeds funding supply, is roofing. Over 200 are on the city's wait list for emergency assistance related to their roof, according to Shyrl Duderwick from Neighborhood Housing Services of South Buffalo. At the same time, with funding so limited, it's difficult to justify investing where a new roof cost more than a home's worth.

## Public Transit Times From Koons Avenue near MLK Park



	Destination	Time of Day	One-Way Travel Time Via Bus	Notes...
1	International Institute of Buffalo	mid afternoon	21 Min.	Traveling west towards downtown is logistically easiest and most convenient.
2	Tops Market on Broadway	Saturday morning	27 Min.	Walking to this destination takes about the same amount of time.
3	Neighborhood Housing Services of South Buffalo	mid day	42 Min.	Getting to this community housing agency which is 5 miles away entails a nearly 45-minute commute by bus.
4	GM Tonawanda	early evening	1 Hr., 7 Min.	Getting to this employer in Tonawanda requires over an hour commute one-way. On weekends, buses run much less frequently.
5	Seneca Niagara Casino	early afternoon	1 Hr., 28 Min.	An entry-level job at the casino in Niagara Falls will involve almost an hour one-way commute.

Source: Travel times were calculated using Google Maps with distances calculated from Koons Avenue.

## Transportation

One out of three households in Buffalo (East of Main Street) is without a vehicle. This is over 19,000 households. The large majority are headed by someone in their working prime or under the age of 65. As a proportion of households, those headed by younger adults are just slightly less likely to be without a car as households headed by someone of retirement age. It's one of the reasons why nearly half of workers in Erie County who use public transit to get to work live somewhere in Buffalo (East of Main Street).

Among vulnerable households surveyed as part of this effort, nearly two-thirds (64%) travel by a means other than a car, with the majority of these depending on public transportation. Barriers to human services related to resident's ability to travel was the most common barrier reported by those surveyed. This is true even though Buffalo (East of Main Street) is one of the best places to live for those depending on public transit, with many routes traveling through this community toward NFTA's hub in downtown Buffalo.

Indeed, getting around within the community may involve relatively short commutes (under a half hour) at least during the week. However, residents participating in focus groups say that travel on weekends is more difficult, with fewer routes and longer wait times for those who can't tailor their schedule to the timing of buses. One local employer whose operations run 24-7 describes how one

employee living in Buffalo (West of Main Street) takes a cab to get to work for shifts on the weekend.

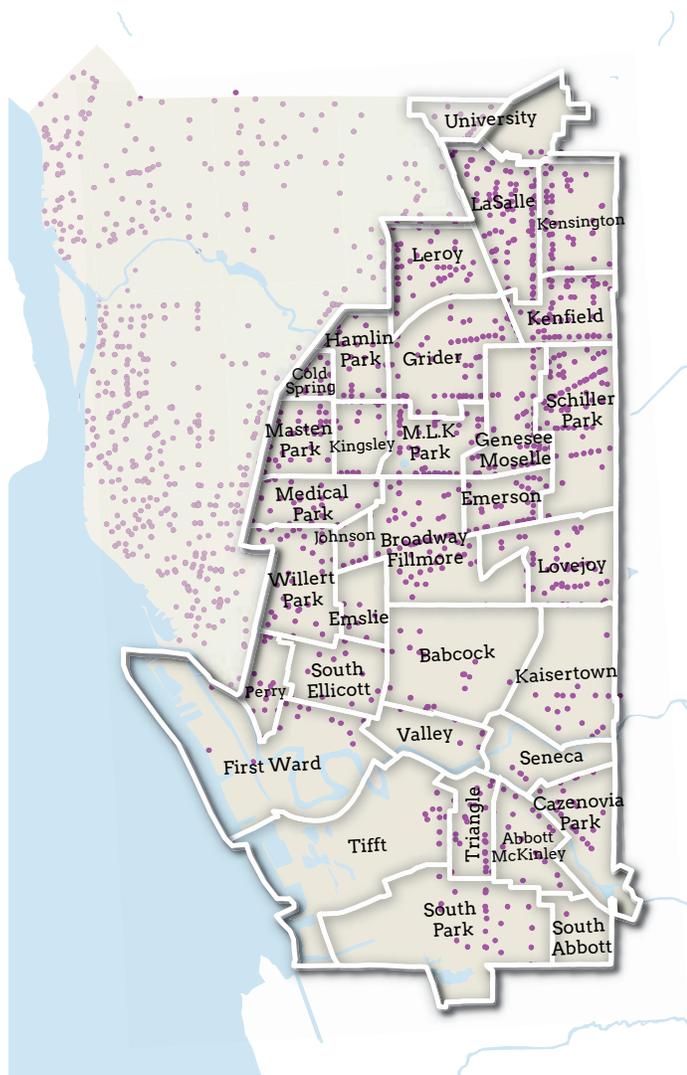
Travel to the suburbs is more challenging, involving one-way commutes of at least an hour to get to the Town of Tonawanda or Niagara Falls where entry level jobs can be found at places like Seneca Niagara Casino and GM Tonawanda. These long commutes are only exacerbated, residents say, by more limited service on weekends, the need to coordinate child care drop-offs and pick ups and the distance between bus stops and destinations along routes in the Southtowns.

## Characteristics of Householders Lacking a Vehicle, 2011

Household by Age	# Renters	# Owners	TOTAL
Householder Under Age 65	13,110	1,872	14,982
Householder Age 65+	2,308	1,966	4,274
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,418</b>	<b>3,838</b>	<b>19,256</b>

Source: 2007-11 American Community Survey

Crime in Buffalo (East of Main Street),  
January - July 2013



Source: CrimeReports.com. Each dot marks the location of an incident of violent crime occurring between January and July of 2013.

## Crime

Overall, the City of Buffalo is one of the least safe places in the region. In 2011, one out of every 100 individuals was a victim of a violent crime. This rate is on par with that in the City of Niagara Falls but five times the rate in neighboring suburbs of Cheektowaga and Tonawanda. Moreover, violence is on the rise, with the average rates between 2009 and 2011 being 27% higher than the three year average rate 20 years ago.

While human services providers described a media bias against the community, creating a perception that safety is lacking and discouraging interest by potential home buyers, recent crime data show there is, in fact, a disproportionate share of violence east of Main Street in Buffalo.

During the first six months of 2013, two out of three violent crimes in the city - homicides, robberies, sexual offenses and assaults - took place in this community. Altogether 1,422 violent crimes against persons were reported in Buffalo (East of Main Street) between January and July 2013. This is about 8 violent crimes a day, and does not include offenses against property such as theft and breaking and entering, which happen even more frequently.

**Proportionally  
more violent  
crime occurs east  
of Main Street**

Residents participating in focus groups echo concerns about crime with many describing it as prevalent and/or on the rise in their neighborhood. For the most part, residents did not feel that this is due to lack of police presence or responsiveness. One woman from the Walden-Bailey area said the police practically live on her street, yet safety remains a concern due to all of the crack houses. Residents at the Valley Community Center also spoke of a recent uptick in violence and the growing boldness of perpetrators. They said police are responsive but are simply dealing with so much.

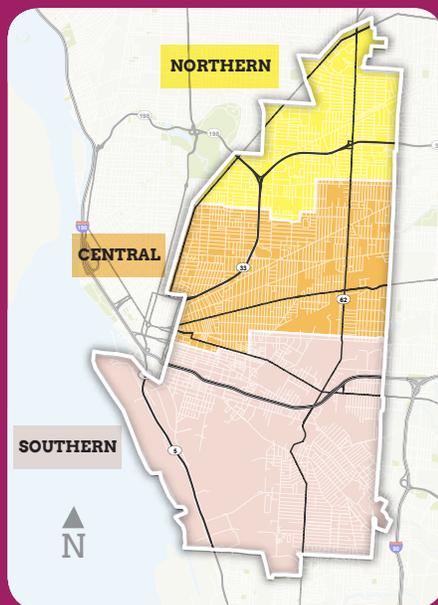
Underpinning the battle with crime may be the prevalence of drug use and selling, a theme that surfaced in almost every conversation with residents and is fostered by the lack of better-paying job opportunities. A resident from the Kensington area described how those who sell can earn up to \$17 an hour, more than twice the minimum wage. Further fostering the drug trade is addiction. Residents from the Valley describe the problem as “huge” and say critical supports have been reduced or shut down.

Disproportionately, youth and young adults are involved in crime. In 2010 (the latest year for which arrest data by age are available), the Buffalo Police Department made 9,006 arrests of individuals under age of 30, representing over half (58%) of all arrests city-wide. These are individuals who may now have a spot on their record, creating barriers to employment. One provider from Resurrection Lutheran Church describes seeing children as young as 4th grade with ankle bracelets, the result of myriad factors from mass exposure to drugs and violence to kids being raised by their siblings. It’s against this backdrop that a coalition of peacemakers known as the Buffalo Peacemakers Gang Intervention Program has been recently launched. Preventing violence is the ultimate goal.

# Landscape of Services



Service providers, their strengths, system gaps, barriers and promising developments

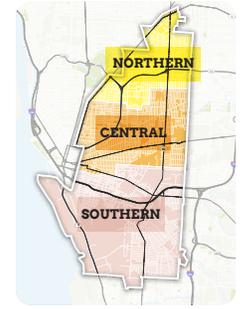


**150** public and private providers

Due to the geographic size of the community and the large number of providers, the maps and provider tables that follow for the **City of Buffalo (East of Main Street)** divide the community into three sections - **Northern**, **Central** and **Southern** portions - for purposes of the analysis.

# Landscape of Services

## City of Buffalo (East of Main Street)



48 PROVIDERS

### NORTHERN NEIGHBORHOODS

#### Northern Neighborhoods

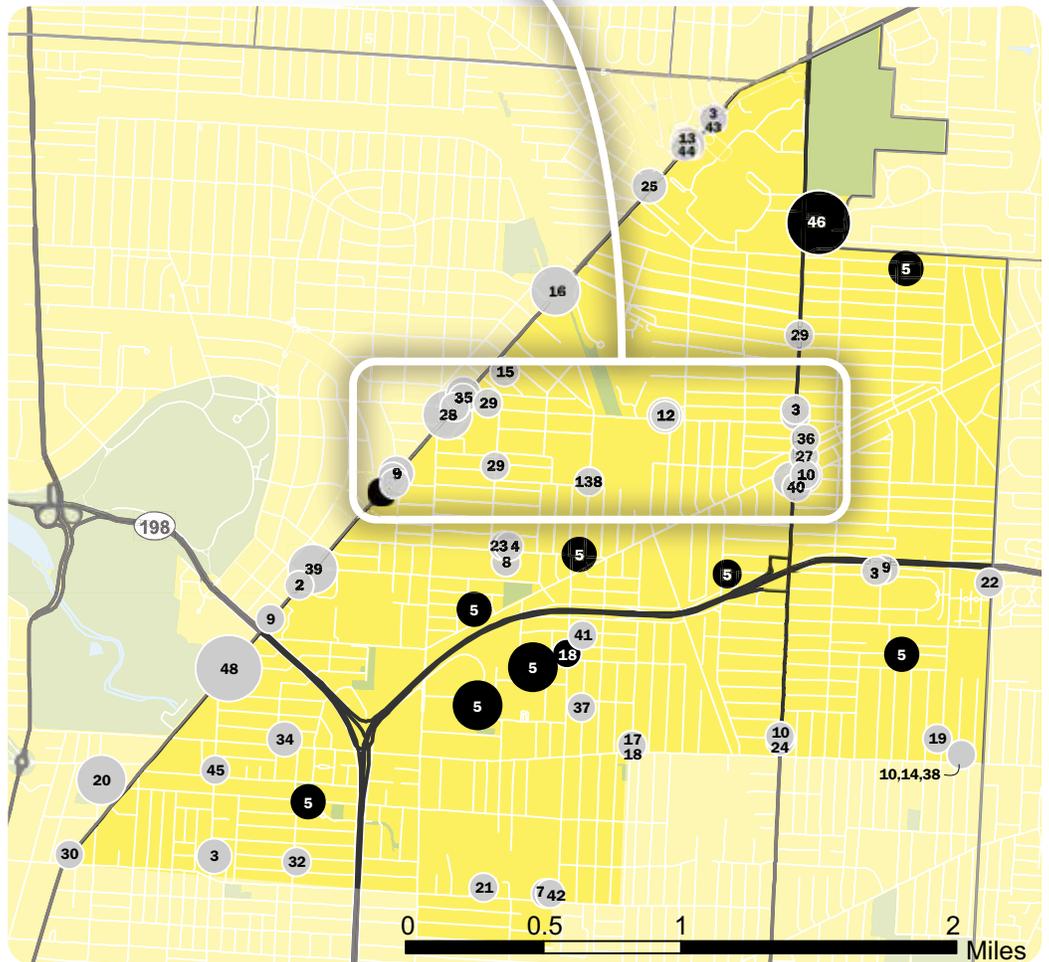
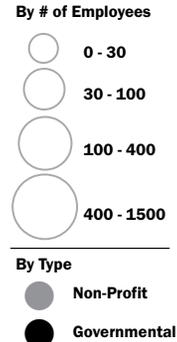
Forty-eight out of the community's 150 providers of human services exist in northern neighborhoods, which include University, LaSalle Leroy, Kensington, Kenfield, Grider, Hamlin Park and Cold Springs neighborhoods.

Main Street and Bailey Avenue are two major thoroughfares where many providers are concentrated, facilitating access for those dependent on public transit.



The safety-net that exists in these northern neighborhoods, much like that across the community at large, is particularly strong in the areas of food, education/job training, health and information/referrals. Meanwhile, few providers offer services or programs offering clothing, transportation, legal services, financial literacy and/or crime/juvenile justices services.

While many agencies and organizations here are regional providers or ones having a reach with sites extending beyond this community, many are smaller, stand-alone not-for-profit operations that may have less capacity to adjust to rising levels of need.





Northern neighborhood service providers continued from previous page.

Target Population

Services

HUMAN SERVICES: AGENCY NAME		Teen Parents	Veterans	Seniors	Homeless
42	Taste of Faith Food Pantry - True Bethel Baptist Church				
43	University at Buffalo (Center for Children and Families)				
44	University Presbyterian Church				
45	Upper Room Church of God in Christ				
46	Veterans Health Administration		✓		
47	We Care Transportation				
48	WNY Sibshop @ Canisius College				

Food	Clothing	Education Training	Affordable Housing	Transportation	Mental Health Addictions	Health/Wellness	Legal	Youth Programs	Financial Literacy	Crime/Juvenile Information/Referral

## Landscape of Services

### City of Buffalo (East of Main Street)

33 PROVIDERS

### Southern Neighborhoods

## SOUTHERN NEIGHBORHOODS

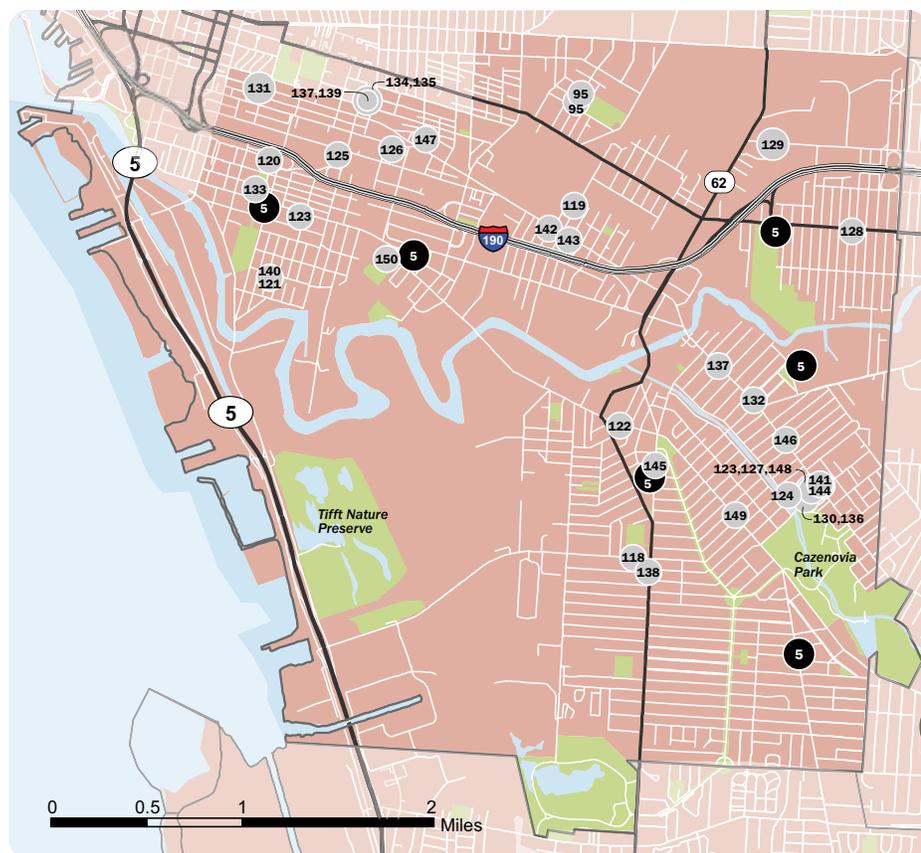
A smaller number of providers exist in neighborhoods to the south, about half as many providers - **33** altogether - compared to 48 in neighborhoods to the north and 69 in central neighborhoods.

Almost all are not-for-profit providers, and at least a third are faith-based. Service hubs exist in the corridor along Seneca Street, north of Cazenovia Park and in a smaller service hub in the First Ward.

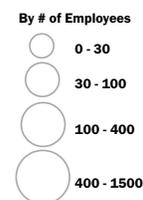
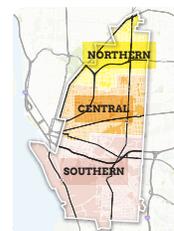


Food, youth programs and information/referral are strengths of the safety-net in this area, at least to the extent there are service providers whose programs offer these services. Also notable is that the area boasts three community centers, in addition to a Boys & Girls Club.

Yet gaps exist for many key services including for transportation, mental health, and crime/juvenile justice, three areas where residents participating in focus groups noted increasing need and notable gaps. These are



compounded by the physical barrier the I-190 creates between neighborhoods, and the geographic distance between South Buffalo and neighborhoods to the north.



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
118 Bishop Edward U Kmiec Food Pantry and Outreach (Catholic Charities South Buffalo Food Pantry)															
119 Boys & Girls Club - Babcock Clubhouse															
120 Buffalo Housing Authority															
121 Buffalo River Food Pantry															
122 CAO Head Start Program															
123 Catholic Charities of Buffalo (3 locations)															
124 Cazenovia Park Baptist Church: The Child & Family Support Program															
125 Community Connections of NY															
126 Computers for Children, Inc															
127 Cornell University Co-Op															
128 East Clinton Branch Library															
129 Family Help Center Food Pantry															
130 Family Promise of Western NY															
131 First Shiloh Baptist Church Food Pantry															
132 Franciscan Center Inc.															
133 Fulton Street - St. Brigid Food Pantry															
134 Good Neighborhoods Healthcare Center (Harvest House)															
135 Good Neighbors Health Clinic															
136 Grace Lutheran Food Pantry															
137 Harvest House (2 Locations)															
138 Neighborhood Housing Services of South Buffalo Weatherization Assistance Program															
139 New Hope Education Center (2 locations)															
140 Old First Ward Community Center															
141 Salvation Army Thrift Store															
142 Seneca Babcock Community Center															
143 Seneca Street Church/ Seneca Street Community Development Corporation															
144 Service Collaborative of WNY															
145 South Buffalo Community Table Inc.															
146 Spectrum Human Services															
147 St Patrick Food Pantry															
148 St. Simon Mission Fund															
149 St. Vincent DePaul/St. Thomas Community Table															
150 Valley Community Center															

# Landscape of Services

## City of Buffalo (East of Main Street)

69 PROVIDERS

### Central Neighborhoods

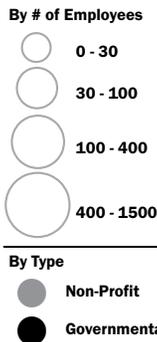
**Sixty-nine providers** (46% of the 150 total) are located in the community's central portion, which includes some of the poorest neighborhoods such as Broadway Fillmore and Masten Park and is home to 42% of those in need in Buffalo (East of Main Street).

Clusters of providers exist along Main Street, between Ferry and Goodell Streets. The corridor along Clinton Avenue is another hub, as shown on the maps across.

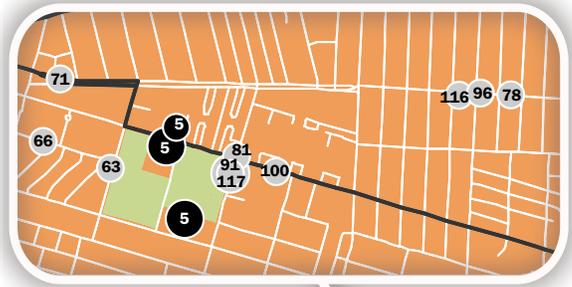
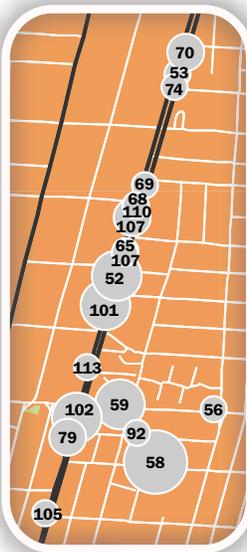
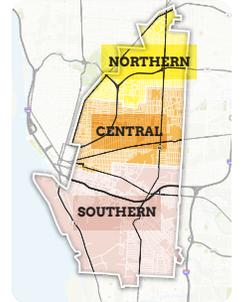


Churches and other faith-based providers account for over two dozen of the total, with the others being largely not-for-profit organizations.

While a number are regional service providers or have sites outside of this community (presumably offering access to greater capacity at large), most appear to be small, not-for-profit operations that may be limited in their capacity to expand to meet current or rising need, absent partnerships or collaboration for this purpose.



## CENTRAL NEIGHBORHOODS



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
49 African American Cultural Center															
50 Antioch Baptist Church															
51 Back To Basics Outreach Ministry															
52 Belmont Housing Services															
53 Bethel Head Start Program (3 locations)															
54 Boys and Girls Club - William C. Baird Clubhouse															
55 Broadway- Fillmore Neighborhood Housing Services															
56 Buffalo City Mission															
Cornerstone Manor															✓
57 Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers															✓
58 Buffalo General Hospital															
59 Buffalo Hearing & Speech Center															
60 Buffalo Lutheran Employment Services															
61 Buffalo Lutheran Food Pantry															
62 Buffalo ReUse															
63 Buffalo Urban League Food Pantry															
64 Calvary Missionary Baptist Church															
65 CAO Dart Program/Community Action of Erie County															
66 CAO Early Head Start Program (2 locations)															
67 CAO Head Start Program (2 locations)															
68 Catholic Charities of Buffalo (4 locations)															
Catholic Charities - Monsignor Carr Institute															
Catholic Charities - Tomorrow's Youth Today GED & Empl. Program															
Food Pantry at Lovejoy Parish Outreach															
Food Pantry at St. Mary of Sorrows															
69 Child & Family Services: Mary Talbert Clinic															
70 Child and Adolescent Treatment Services (CATS) Independent Living Program															
71 Citizens Community Development Corporation (CCDC)															
72 Community Action Information Center (CAIC INC)															
73 Community Services for the Developmentally Disabled															
74 Compass House															✓
75 Crucial Human Services, Inc.															
76 Deliverance Temple Food Pantry															
77 Dorothy J. Collier Center (formerly Friends to the Elderly)															✓
78 Ellicott District Community Development															✓
79 Every Person Influences Children (EPIC)															✓
80 Food Pantry & Clothing Boutique - UCM Food Pantry															
81 Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, incl. Feed the Needy															
82 Goodwill Industries of WNY															✓
83 G.R.O.U.P. Ministries (God Recognizes Our Ultimate Potential)															

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
84 Greater Refuge Temple of Christ Church															
85 Greater Works Christian Fellowship (incl. Food Pantry & Clothing Closet)															
86 HomeFront, Inc.															
87 Humboldt Parkway Food Pantry															
88 Ivy House															
89 Jefferson Family Clinic															
90 Jericho Road Ministries															
91 JFK Community Center															
92 Kaleida Health Outpatient Behavioral Health															
93 Legal Services for the Elderly															
94 Macedonia Baptist Church															
95 Matt Urban Center		✓	✓	✓	✓										
Monroe Street Apartments															
Polonia Hall/Matt Urban HOPE Center															✓
Rother Refugee Apartments															
Thomas J. Wojnar Senior Apartments															✓
T.J. Dulski Community Center															✓
96 Mid-Erie Counseling and Treatment Services: Child Mental Health															
97 Moot Senior Citizens Center															✓
98 Neighborhood Information Center															
99 Neighborhood Legal Services															
100 New Covenant United Church of Christ (@ 495 Clinton St.)															
101 Olmsted Center for the Visually Impaired															
102 Research Institute on Addictions - SUNY Buffalo															
103 Response to Love Intake & Food Pantry															
104 Resurrection Lutheran Church															
105 Salvation Army															✓
106 Schiller Park Senior Center															✓
107 Spectrum Human Services															
New Alternatives-Mentally Ill Chemical Abuse (MICA) Outpatient Program															
108 St. Luke AME Zion Church															
109 St. Luke's Mission Of Mercy incl. Feed The Hungry															✓
110 St. Vincent De Paul Society															
111 Teaching and Restoring Youth (T.R.Y.)															
112 True Bethel Clothes Closet															
113 United Neighborhoods															
114 Urban Christian Ministries															
115 Western New York Law Center															
116 YMCA															✓
117 YWCA															

## Strengths of the System

**The community is home to the largest number of human services providers counted to date as part of the 12 community assessments being conducted**, including Buffalo (West of Main Street) where 109 providers were identified and the City of Niagara Falls where 74 providers are located. The relatively large number in this community offers an existing framework for filling gaps and removing barriers that is unlikely to require the establishment of any new operations but rather the strengthening of what already exists.

### **Four colleges and university are located in the community**

(University at Buffalo, Canisius, Villa Maria and ECC), providing not only training and workforce development supports but potential partners for the human services sector, especially in the areas of education, research, fundraising, advocacy, and volunteers. They also offer resources for bolstering adjacent neighborhoods in terms of safety, housing, and economic development. The University of Buffalo has been a key partner in the Promised Neighborhood Initiative which brought unprecedented investments and best practice programs to families living in Zip Code 14215 (see Promising Developments).

**Five hospitals exist in the community** (ECMC, Buffalo General, Sisters of Charity, Mercy Hospital and Roswell) to meet the health needs of residents and the community. In addition, Buffalo (East of Main Street) is home to the UB School of Medicine and Dental Medicine, a major regional health educator.

**The community's location next to the Town of Cheektowaga, which has been increasingly affected by poverty, especially in neighborhoods near the City of Buffalo border, has made way for partnerships and intermunicipal solutions to common concerns** such as crime, vacancies, declining housing values and economic development. A Buffalo Cheektowaga Task Force exists with a geographic scope as far as Bailey Ave, but is said to lack representation from the City of Buffalo.

**With demand pushing up housing prices in Buffalo (West of Main Street), there has been an influx of immigrants to the community**, especially Muslims, in areas near the mosque on Sobieski Street in the Broadway Fillmore Neighborhood. While foreign-born populations may experience unique needs and barriers to services, they have also been a source of community revitalization on the West Side of Buffalo and offer the same potential here.

## 4 institutions of higher education

## Gaps in Services

Both providers and residents reported that **programming for youth is lacking**, as many existing programs have been forced to cut back due to funding. At the same time children are increasingly exposed to drugs and violence.

**Greater vocational training opportunities are needed, as many youth are not college bound and need to leave school with skills enabling them to earn more than minimum wage.** While students at East High School now have access to Erie 1 BOCES, there are other lower performing schools and students who are struggling academically who would benefit from BOCES training, as too few quality vocational programs exist within the Buffalo City School District (a recent review by the Buffalo News reveals that only a fraction of enrolled students ultimately pass industry-standard exams).

At the same time the community has disproportionately high health needs (lead poisoning, mental health and sexually transmitted disease are several that providers mentioned), **many census tracts are federally designated by the Health Resources and Services Administration as medically underserved**, with shortages of primary

### Sheehan Hospital's closure deepened a health service gap

medical care, dental or mental health providers. According to providers, affordable mental health care is entirely missing. Medicaid coverage further limits residents' access to care, which deepened in 2012 with the closing of Sheehan Hospital, a medical center with a long-standing commitment to the

underserved.

**Growing refugee and immigrant populations have language and other special needs** that providers aren't always equipped to address or make referrals.

Collaboration among providers could be stronger. Only 12 out of 20 provider representatives participating in a focus group say they regularly work together, **limiting the development of longer-lasting, higher impact holistic solutions to address issues such as mental issues, housing and crime that are closely interrelated.**

There is a **dearth of resources for home-owning seniors who live on a limited income and need help making necessary repairs** to maintain their home.

**Safe and affordable permanent housing supports are a significant area of need**, according to the director of the Buffalo City Mission who says more than half of clients come directly from housing and not the streets. Homelessness is also an issue; 1,000 across Buffalo are homeless, and about 150-200 are in the streets on any given night.

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## Barriers to Connecting with Residents

**Public policy on vacant land has prevented more productive uses** by adjoining homeowners, who, for instance, are unable to make a purchase under the homestead law unless they intend to reside on the premises.

This **community covers a lot of ground, about 10 miles from north to south, with many distinct neighborhoods in between within which residents seek services, oftentimes unwilling or unable to venture out for help** in other neighborhoods. The Seneca Babcock neighborhood is an example of one that was described “a bubble.”

**Dependence on alternative modes of traveling create barriers to services and jobs**, especially for those located outside the community. Difficulties are exasperated by declining businesses and jobs within the community, as evidenced by the number of business vacancies.

**Higher levels of collaboration among providers are stifled by geographic distance, operational silos, competition and perceptions** by some that collaboration may hinder operations and mission.

**Residents’ response to crime tends not to be as intolerant as it might be for a number of reasons:** the sheer volume, fear of retribution, protection of friends and family, and the normalization of some crime, especially drugs.

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**214 applications are on a wait list for a roof**

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With unemployment high and incomes low, **residents lack access to credit enabling them to make home investments or even purchase affordable groceries on credit.** Alleged red-lining by banks and insurers creates additional barriers to investments.

**Low educational attainment and skills are obstacles to residents accessing job openings in their own back yard;** low literacy levels also create barriers to information and higher reliance on human relationships for accessing information.

**Direct service needs have risen, especially in the areas of food (as some pantries have closed and SNAP allocations have been recently cut) and housing, while funding has been reduced and costs have increased,** especially expenses relating to fundraising and donor development.

**There is skepticism by some providers stemming from a perception that their neighborhood has already been studied to death** over the years and yet need remains great while promises are unkept.

**With generational poverty, not enough role models for youth exist.** As one provider put it, it’s so rare to see someone succeed that it’s seen as “abnormal.” Poverty is more the norm.

## Promising Developments

**A one-stop center for veterans – Veterans One-stop Center of Western New York - recently opened** at 1280 Main Street and seeks to be the go-to source for veterans, offering a range of on-site services and information and referral.

**The Matt Urban Center is growing housing for women and children.** One project, Hope Gardens, is already underway and will offer 20 units when it opens later this year. HOPE Center will provide additional capacity in about two years.

**Zip Code 14215 has been the focus of multimillion dollar private-public investments, including a \$6 million grant from the national Annie E. Casey Foundation, as part of the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood Initiative,** aimed at creating a neighborhood that provides the range of supports families need to prosper, including a recently opened Children’s Academy.

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**\$31M+**  
invested in  
**Buffalo’s Promise Neighborhood**

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**Say Yes to Education, Inc.! is a model for improving academic performance that was recently launched in the Buffalo School District.** It promises free college to those who graduate and the range of supports students need to succeed in school.

**Over the next years, an expanding medical corridor in the Fruit Belt neighborhood is projected to support up to 17,000 jobs** and spur additional nearby private sector development Strong workforce bridges between key players like UB and Roswell Park and the host community should help ensure that residents benefit from job and community development.

**Notable revitalization is happening in a neighborhood known as the Larkin District, anchored by the Larkin Building and the adjacent Larkin Square,** together featuring offices where about 2,650 now work, dining options, outdoor entertainment and more. This area has undergone such extensive transformation that national attention is being paid to it.

**A coalition of six peacemaking organizations in Buffalo has been recently launched by Mayor Brown with support from the city, foundations, the faith community and others.** Working in tandem with Buffalo Police Department, residents and youth, the goal of Buffalo Peacemakers Gang Prevention Program is the prevention of violence through conflict resolution, youth mentoring, greater resources for youth programs and stronger supports for families impacted by crime.

**Erie County’s Land Bank (Buffalo Erie Niagara Land Improvement Corp.) has recently expanded powers** to acquire land and sell land, tackling blight, vacancy and potential growth more effectively.

Modeled after a nationally recognized best practice for adult education and keeping youth in high school, **programs at the new Buffalo Center for Arts and Technology begin this January.**

Insights from the Field

# Recommendations and Best Practices

## Where we gathered our information and what we are reporting

These insights, recommendations and strategies 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: interviews conducted by the Mobile Safety-Net Team, in addition to those conducted by the University at Buffalo Regional Institute with Say Yes Buffalo, Buffalo City School District, Belmont Housing Resources of WNY, Broadway-Fillmore Neighborhood Housing Services, South Buffalo Neighborhood Accountability Board, Buffalo City Mission, NYS Assemblymember Crystal Peoples Stokes, Ellicott District Common Council Member Darius Pridgen, Goodwill Industries, Harvest House of South Buffalo, Good Shepherd Food Pantry, Neighborhood Housing Services of South Buffalo, Old First Ward Community Center, Seneca Babcock Community Center, Seneca Street Community Development Program, and Western New York Veterans Housing Coalition.

An agency focus group was held in July 2013, with 18 provider representatives present. Resident input was gathered through conversations with residents at the Matt Urban Hope Center, Friends of the Elderly, Midtown Bible Church, the Valley Community Center, and the Patient Voices Network, a patient advisory team from the UB Department of Family Medicine.

Local data also inform these findings and recommendations.



**Unite human services providers through the establishment of a human services coalition**

Human services providers taking part in a focus group agreed that strengthening relationships to deliver holistic solutions is a priority next step. There was agreement that more collaboration is needed to fill gaps, grow organizational sustainability and shape the kind of policy that could improve the delivery of human services. A standardized application for assistance is one goal that was mentioned. According to these providers, relationships to date have been stymied by operational silos, the large number of providers that exist in the community, geographic barriers, and competition for limited dollars. Only a slight majority of provider representatives present at an agency focus group said they work regularly with others.

**STRATEGIES**

With the large number of providers in Buffalo (East of Main Street), a first-step to greater collaboration might be the creation of three, place-based human services councils representing the range of human services interests in the north, central and south neighborhoods. These would meet regularly to share information,

advocate on common interests, collaborate on funding applications and partner to fill gaps in programs and services. The Regional Economic Development Council's Consolidated Funding Application is one source of funding.

Representatives from these three councils and, perhaps, others human service coalitions across the region, particularly from Buffalo (West of Main Street) would come together periodically to tackle the most pressing regional human services challenges.

Council membership would include representation from the community's colleges and universities, hospitals, elected representatives, business associations, and the media to ensure a broad network of support and information channels that garner the buy-in from all with a stake in the alleviation of poverty in the community.

**WHO NEEDS TO ACT**

All public, private and church-based human services provides; colleges and universities (UB, ECC, Canisius, Village Maria, and Trocaire) hospitals (ECMC, Buffalo General, Roswell, Mercy, and Sisters of Charity), regional foundations, and the Mobile Safety-Net Team (to facilitate the initial convening).

**MODELS TO CONSIDER**

While a number of strong human services coalitions exist locally (in Niagara Falls and North Tonawanda, for instance), the Seattle Human Services Coalition is an example of a long-standing successful group that has secured millions in additional local funding for human services and is advocating for member interests at the state level.

<http://shscoalition.org/>

**MODELS TO CONSIDER**

**SEATTLE HUMAN SERVICES COALITION**

The City of Seattle's Human services Coalition may be one of the strongest and most successful alliances of the human services providers existing across the nation, at least in terms of public funding it has garnered and the united voice it has been able to raise on half of its members' interests. Officially formed in 1987, the advocacy efforts of this 25+ years old group has resulted in public funding for basic human needs going from zero to \$50 million annually from the city's general fund. The coalition has also been instrumental in shaping policy, budget priorities and forcing decisions that consider impacts on the disenfranchised. Most recently, the group sponsored a forum that brought together existing elected officials and candidates for office for a question/answer session on topics and policy of importance to members such as poverty, safety, unemployment, homelessness and housing. With over 270 members, the group has sub-coalitions formed around topics of member expertise and interest: health, youth development, food, senior services, advancement and capacity building and more. The coalition has received national attention for the strides it has made, being featured in 2012 in the Chronicle of Philanthropy in an article called "Lifting Nonprofit Voices."

<http://www.shscoalition.org/>



## Strengthen existing information and referral resources

The need for greater information and awareness, especially relating to jobs training, housing, and mental health, was a theme emerging from a conversation with residents in the Valley, where economic need is great but is not as long-standing as in neighborhoods to the north. Community-wide, information and awareness barriers are suggested by lower percentages of households who receive public benefits, as compared to Buffalo (West of Main Street). Growing refugee populations create additional obstacles to effectively delivering information and referrals that providers noted. Meanwhile, the depth of poverty many residents live in can impair their ability to seek out and process information, diverting their focus to simple survival and crises of the day. Two out of five households live in crisis mode, and confusing processes hinder over a quarter of those saying they have encountered barriers to services.

## STRATEGIES

Build upon what's already available such as 2-1-1 WNY and Arounja.com to create a comprehensive, user-friendly, affordable and readily updated information tool that is responsive to the needs of human service providers who make referrals and residents. All providers should ensure their information is present and accurate.

Offer information to residents where they are, through greater partnerships with churches, pastors, schools, block clubs, the bus, corner stores, and neighborhood markets and hubs. Ensure that these persons and places have the information and capacity they need to provide information and/or make referrals.

Expand "single stops" at food pantries, libraries, public schools, community centers, and public housing sites, while promoting and strengthening existing ones (such as the new VOC, Hope Center, Valley Community Center, Seneca Babcock Community Center and Response to Love).

## WHO NEEDS TO ACT

All human services providers, providers of 2-1-1 WNY (Olmsted Center for Sight) and Arounja.com (Community Connections of New York, Erie County, Gateway-Longview, New Directors Youth and Family Services, Family Voices Network of Erie County, Families' Child Advocacy Network, University at Buffalo, the John R. Oishei Foundation, and Bear Code), churches, block groups, retail venues, food pantries, and one-stop centers, the HOPE Center, Veterans One-Stop Center of WNY, the foundation community.

## MODELS TO CONSIDER

San Francisco Public Library is extending its reach to the city's homeless and other vulnerable by providing information and referrals made possible through partnerships and a staff social worker.

<http://kalw.org/post/helping-homeless-sf-public-library>

## MODELS TO CONSIDER

### CHEEKTOWAGA'S CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM

Changes in the delivery of mental health care have resulted in a growing number of individuals with mental illness living in the community with symptoms that go untreated and culminating in a crisis where the police become front-line responders. In Cheektowaga, a large and increasing number of calls involving mental illness served as the impetus for a new partnership between the Cheektowaga Police Department and Crisis Services and the formation of a Crisis Intervention Team. The goal is to better serve the mentally ill, connecting them with community supports and preventing avoidable arrests, the escalation of violence, and costs associated with repeat police calls and cycles of hospitalization. To accomplish this, stronger bridges are forged between the police and community providers. Well visits are another aspect of the initiative and entail following up with individuals who may have required multiple police responses to connect with them with information and supports while they are more stable. Although this latter component will cost approximately \$30,000 annually to fund, improved outcomes and ultimate costs savings are goals.

<http://www.tocny.org/departments/police.aspx>



## Lift skill and educational levels of residents while strengthening work-enabling supports

Over 49,000 adults age 25 and up have no skills or training beyond high school, at most. Few at risk have vocational training. These are individuals who may lack the capacity to participate in the labor market beyond low-wage employment. Supporting this, just a fraction of higher-paying jobs in the community are held by residents. The poor, inconsistent performance of Buffalo Public Schools largely contributes to this. Yet the cycle of poverty will continue until more residents can successfully compete for higher-paying jobs. Quality education and job training and the removal of barriers that residents experience such as the need for affordable child care, flexible transportation, English fluency and awareness of training options are critical.

### STRATEGIES

Ensure that every child who is not college bound has access to a quality vocational program while in high school through expanded partnerships between the Buffalo public schools, Erie 1 BOCES, Erie Community College, and local employers.

Raise awareness and enforcement of options for students and parents under No Child Left Behind, which include transfers to suburban and private schools.

Expand links between adult GED and college programs. A partnership between ECC and Buffalo City Mission offers a model. Year Up is another successful model. Also, the I-BEST Program in Washington offers a way of combining GED and vocational training.

Engage growing local employers such as UB and Roswell to continue to strengthen connections with the community in a way that directly gets more residents into living-wage jobs, either through employment or training.

Bolster ESL and other supports for refugees where demand is high such as at Response to Love.

Strengthen partnerships between Buffalo Public School District and area colleges and universities to bolster school leadership and strengthen pipelines to college.

Increase awareness among disabled residents and health providers in the community of the strong job training and work supports available through ACCES-VR.

Engage elected and other leaders in removing disincentives to work (insufficient child care subsidies, weekend transportation gaps, and long-term Section 8 vouchers).

### WHO NEEDS TO ACT

Buffalo Public School District, Erie 1 BOCES, area colleges and universities, including ECC, UB Educational Opportunity Center, Buffalo Employment and Training Center, Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Investment Board, Dream It, Do It WNY, Buffalo Niagara Partnership, Buffalo Car Share, ACCES-VR, NFTA, Erie County, federal and state elected representatives.

### MODELS TO CONSIDER

Civcorps Academy is a charter school in Oakland giving older teens and young adults who have dropped out of high school a second chance to earn a high school diploma and train for a job.

<http://www.cvcorps.org/academy/#field>

### MODELS TO CONSIDER

## HARMAC MEDICAL PRODUCTS

Headquartered near the intersection of Bailey and Genesee, Harmac Medical Products is a manufacturing company located in the heart of Buffalo (East of Main Street) in Zip Code 14211. The company employs at least 350 on-site, and the majority (65%) are women. More impressively, the majority of employees are from Buffalo, with at least a quarter from Zip Codes 14211 and 14215. Employment applications are accepted on site and financial incentives are available for existing employees who refer others. The company is also known to hire qualified applicants who don't have a necessary GED, on the condition they pass the exam within 90 days, creating a larger incentive for these individuals to succeed. Career paths are fostered by providing a generous tuition reimbursement program. Additional employee benefits and perks include health, dental and life insurance, a 401(k), paid time off, wellness programs with financial incentives, an on-site fitness center, a cafeteria with affordable, healthy lunches, a farmer's market during the summer, lunch topics of interest and an employee assistance program offering a variety of services and referrals. Community investment distinguishes this company, too, which has planted trees in the vicinity, created a small urban park, worked with the city and NFTA to repair nearby sidewalks and build bus shelters and purchased blighted property from the city to help reduce crime and decay in the neighborhood nearby.

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



## Bolster supports for home-owning seniors and protections for low-income renters

About one in four vulnerable residents face pressing housing-related concerns. Providers say there is a dearth of resources for home-owning seniors especially for roof replacements. Homelessness is also common, resulting from a lack of affordable housing and other factors. Indeed, 80% of lower-income renters are cost burdened, and residents describe how landlords raise rents for those with a section 8 voucher. In other words, the funding associated with this public program, intended to give lower-income families an opportunity to live in choice neighborhoods and break the cycle of poverty, is actually benefiting private landlords in some of the lowest-opportunity neighborhoods. Meanwhile, landlords from the community who desire to rent to quality tenants could benefit from greater information.

### STRATEGIES

Arm all tenants and voucher issuers with the information they need to identify housing where tenants get the most for their money, taking into account not only affordability and apartment quality but neighborhood factors such as public transit, job access, school quality, food access and crime. A region-wide comprehensive searchable listing of rental property, including indicators of quality,

would facilitate this. Belmont has a listing offering a foundation.

Engage federal elected leaders in changing policy that currently allows landlords of low-value apartments to be paid county-wide fair market value rents through the Section 8 program. Part of the voucher money in these low-value areas go toward rehabilitation and improvement.

Bring together funders and faith-based providers such as Habitat for Humanity and the Isaiah 61 Project to discuss possibilities for stretching dollars and expanding services to cover work on homes owned by vulnerable populations such as seniors. The Urban Resources Development Corporation is a collaboration of eight churches in northwest Philadelphia that is renewing blighted areas and helping low-income seniors with painting and roof repairs.

Use community centers and neutral venues such as libraries and schools to help raise awareness of existing affordable housing supports (HEAP, Empower NY), especially in areas of where need is growing as in South Buffalo.

Expand training opportunities for landlords so they know their rights under the law and what tools are available to them to seek out quality tenants such as the NYS Eviction Registry.

### WHO NEEDS TO ACT

Belmont Housing Resources for WNY, Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority, Erie County DSS, Catholic Charities, Community Action Organization of Erie County, Homeless Alliance of WNY, Erie and Niagara County CoC, Habitat for Humanity, the Isaiah 61 Project, Neighborhood Housing Services of South Buffalo, South Buffalo Neighborhood Accountability Board, Neighborhood Legal Services, UB Law School's Affordable Housing Clinic and funders.

### MODELS TO CONSIDER

The Isaiah 61 Project in Niagara Falls is training the unemployed while rehabilitating vacant housing.

<http://isaiah61niagarafalls.org/>

### MODELS TO CONSIDER

## ISAIAH 61 PROJECT

Mass home vacancies and high levels of unemployment in Niagara Falls are being addressed by a growing faith-based organization known as the Isaiah 61 Project. This organization is turning vacant homes into classroom space where individuals who are unemployed and lack skills get training in the construction trades. Employment outcomes, so far, have been impressive with the large majority of graduates finding employment. At the same time, vacant homes, purchased from the city for \$500, are being rehabilitated and sold to low-income first-time home buyers for around \$30,000. It's a win-win for all involved and a recent grant from the NYS Power Authority will allow the program to triple class sizes. Moreover, a just-awarded grant from the state will allow Isaiah 61 to transform an abandoned fire hall into a re-use outlet and additional classroom space. Partnerships and support from the city, area foundations, BOCES, construction material suppliers, real estate agents and the faith-based community have been key to this initiative's success. It's a model that could be replicated in Buffalo where vacancies and unemployment are no less pressing than in Niagara Falls (and where many construction jobs will become available with the expansion of the downtown medical corridor). It's also a model that could be expanded to cover urgent home repairs for the low-income elderly population.

<http://isaiah61niagarafalls.org/>



## Strengthen the safety-net for affordable and healthy food

Not having enough money for food is the second most common urgent concern vulnerable residents face. Indeed, many census tracts are designated by the USDA as food deserts where food insecurity is high for the vulnerable. This crisis will only intensify, both for residents, pantries and soup kitchens, as federal reductions to the SNAP program are implemented in November 2013. A family of four will see cuts up to \$38/month. Yet survey findings also suggest that not all who might benefit from SNAP are taking advantage of it, especially in the South Buffalo area, suggesting lack of awareness or access barriers. Worse, those with food needs appear to be taken advantage of by a food truck that allows residents whose food stamps for the month have run out to purchase higher-priced foods on food stamp credit, contrary to the law. This only perpetuates poverty and the waste of public food dollars.

### STRATEGIES

Expand farmers markets and mobile food markets in food deserts of the community. Downtown, especially near the former Sheehan Hospital, is one residents mentioned. Partnerships with regional farms and the Massachusetts Avenue Project could facilitate this.

Explore why some strong farmers markets offering van services for neighborhood residents, EBT, and “an expand-the-buck” option are underutilized. A neighborhood survey may help in this regard.

Continue to promote individual and community gardens, which are highly desired by residents according to a survey conducted by St. Lawrence’s Clinic. Grassroots Gardens has 30 gardens east of Main Street in Buffalo which are a low and/or no-cost solution to food access. Imagine Community Gardens, a new collaborative effort from Lockport, offers another model from within the region that’s revitalizing a blighted street and has produced a “mountain of vegetables,” all organic, for area families in its first year.

Engage leaders in demanding greater regulation of food outlets that accept SNAP, in violation of federal policy.

Expand opportunities for residents to strengthen financial literacy and food budgeting skills. Grocers could play a role in the latter.

Offer incentives for corner stores and mini-markets located in food deserts to expand selections of healthy foods.

Increase awareness of food programs, pantries and other supports particularly in southern parts of the community.

### WHO NEEDS TO ACT

Food providers (especially food pantries and soup kitchens dining halls); grocers (Tops, Save-a-Lot), Food For All, Grassroots Gardens, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Broadway Market, Wilson Street Urban Farm, Food Policy Council, of Buffalo and Erie County, Field & Fork Network, libraries, community centers, churches, Massachusetts Avenue Project, Consumer Credit Counseling Service, area banks, United Way of Buffalo and Erie County CASH Program, public housing sites.

### MODELS TO CONSIDER

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

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

## Strengthen supports for mental health promotion and intervention

Providers taking part in an agency focus group agreed that promoting mental health is a priority issue, since it’s often at the root of homelessness, crime, and other issues challenging the community. Moreover, trauma from violence, unemployment, financial strain, addiction, disability, and broken families are factors that only weigh on mental health needs in the community. As one provider put it, the community as a whole suffers from post-traumatic stress. Meanwhile, provider shortages exist, with many tracts designated as underserved for mental health care. Both human services providers and residents pointed to how many key supports have been cut or reduced (Sheehan Memorial Hospital and Buffalo General’s psychiatric unit) without a safety-net for individuals being put in place.

### STRATEGIES

Raise awareness of Mid Erie’s Early Recognition and Screening Program offering free and early screening for children.

Expand church-provider partnerships to reach residents with information and available supports. A recent conference held at Ephesus Ministries, in partnership with ECMC and other providers on health and mental health topics is an example of a relevant event that drew many.

Maximize opportunities under the Affordable Care Act to expand access to mental health services and supports, including community health workers.

Explore potential partnerships between the Buffalo Police

Department and Crisis Services' Police/Mental Health Coordination Project to improve delivery of appropriate services to those in need of mental health treatment who find themselves in the criminal justice system.

Strengthen opportunities for peer and neighborhood-based support for those in need using block clubs as sources of information and referrals.

Get all uninsured adults signed up for health insurance (Medicaid or an Affordable Care Act plan); engaged federal representatives in demanding mental health parity under Medicare (covering seniors and the disabled).

### WHO NEEDS TO ACT

Hospitals, health and mental health providers and clinics, churches, Buffalo Police Department, Crisis Services, area block clubs, public housing sites, libraries, Mid Erie, Buffalo Public School District, child care sites, and federal representatives.

### MODELS TO CONSIDER

The Cheektowaga Police Department has partnered with Crisis Services to train all officers on how to better respond to calls involving a mental health need.

<http://www.tocny.org/departments/police.aspx>

## Strengthen out-of-school supports for youth while combatting exposure to drugs and violence

Providers reported a need for greater youth programming, which has been cut. One major provider in the community described funding for youth as reduced to a quarter of what it was; a skeleton budget. Providers also described a need for youth who have dropped out or aged out of existing programming, especially in light of the limited number of constructive options for those with limited education and transportation barriers. Meanwhile drugs, gangs and crime are pervasive and constant lures, especially for children who are practically being raised by older siblings or parents who may not have the time, capacity or support they need to effectively parent.

### STRATEGIES

Ensure that all children have access to age-appropriate programming outside of school, especially weekends, summers and school breaks, through partnerships with churches, libraries, community centers, parks and recreation providers, and existing providers of youth programs. Programs for older youth should

redirect them to education (re-enrollment, GED, vocational) and work/skills training (via BETC or EOC), while programs for younger children could incorporate drug use prevention, alternatives to violence, and academic supports.

Expand and strengthen block groups to unite families and reduce drugs and crime. Groups in the Masten District and the Whitney Place Block Club offer effective models.

Support and engage Buffalo Peacemakers, a recently formalized coalition with roots in the community and broad-based support from the city, foundations, faith-based organizations and others, offering a multi-pronged approach to violence prevention and intervention.

Expand proven home-based parenting supports. Even "visits" and supports by text are proving successful in pilot studies as a way of strengthening parenting skills, and home visits are a part of the Affordable Care Act, offering a possible source of funding and expansion.

Increase mentoring opportunities for vulnerable youth; engage employees from the city's largest employers to expand the pool of mentors, as well as workplace pipelines offering apprenticeships and skills-development opportunities for youth in their own back yard.

### WHO NEEDS TO ACT

Youth providers, community centers, MADDADS, Buffalo Peacemakers Gang Intervention Program, block groups, all residents, major employers in Buffalo, UB EOC, BETC, existing mentoring programs (Big Brothers Big Sisters, Compeer).

### MODELS TO CONSIDER

Big Brothers Big Sisters was identified in a report by the U.S. Dept. of Justice as an effective strategy against drug use by youth (along with its other positive outcomes).

<http://www.beafriend.org/>

## Reduce mass concentrations of poverty through revitalization and job growth

Over half the population here lives in poverty or is at risk, a greater percentage than in any other higher-needs community in the region. This factor is individually significant in putting families at greater risk for unmet need and deepening poverty. Research shows that low-income families living in more affluent areas fare better economically than those in areas of concentrated poverty, where strong supports get over-tapped, where storefronts are vacant and local jobs have been lost, and where residents don't have access to social networks that can be resourceful in accessing opportunity, including sufficient role models for youth. Although several promising initiatives are underway, some providers are skeptical that the community and those most in need will benefit.

### STRATEGIES

Explore and aggressively address allegations of red-lining, a discriminatory practice that violates federal law and prevents investment in the community.

Leverage growth and revitalization in the Fruit Belt and Larkin District to strengthen supports for families and children through housing investment, home ownership incentives, public transit incentives, safer streets, streetscape improvements, jobs and jobs training for residents, including career pipelines that target local residents for jobs, small business development incentives, and a culture that appeals to young urbanites desiring to live near where they work and entrepreneurs looking for inexpensive office space.

Leverage anchor institutions in supporting the community through hiring, employee housing incentives, and community investment. Harmac Medical Products offers a model for doing this (see Model to Consider on page 38).

Unite, grow and offer commercial identity to businesses through the creation of business associations and districts. Aside from the South Buffalo Chamber and Buffalo Niagara Partnership, nothing exists in this community leaving a void in neighborhoods north of South Buffalo. The Grant-Ferry Association and the Hertel-North Buffalo Business Association offer models.

Foster entrepreneurship through greater partnerships for training and technical assistance from area institutions of higher education, particularly the Small Business Development Center at Buffalo State College and the Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership at UB. Collaborations with Launch NY also offers opportunities to catalyze business growth in the community.

Closely link economic development strategies and investments with those for affordable housing and public transportation for an infrastructure that supports lower-income families.

### WHO NEEDS TO ACT

Lenders and insurers, anchors institutions in the Buffalo Niagara Medical Corridor, investors and anchor institution in the Larkin District, the City of Buffalo, economic development agencies and initiatives, residents and block groups, institutions of higher education (especially Buffalo State and University at Buffalo), Buffalo Erie Niagara Land Improvement Corporation and the NFTA.

### MODELS TO CONSIDER

Southeast of Toronto sits Cabbagetown, a neighborhood that has improved, capitalizing on its history and proximity to downtown and the University of Toronto, despite a history of dilapidation and poverty.

<http://cabbagetowntoronto.com/>

More locally, Buffalo's Elmwood Village is a hub for businesses and a thriving community for residents. Yet it wasn't always this way.

<http://www.elmwoodvillage.org>

# Appendices

# Appendix A - Data Sources and Notes

## 1.1 Cover Map

**Service providers:** The human service providers that are mapped are listed on pages 27, 29, 31 and 32. The cover map does not represent these providers by their employment size or organizational status as the inside maps on pages 26, 28 and 30 do.

**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 locations of elementary and secondary schools in Buffalo (East of Main Street) are from the 2012 NYS School Report Card database available from the NYS Education Department. Total enrollment reflects total students enrolled at these 32 schools during 2011-12.

**Major Employers:** Selected large employers in Buffalo (East of Main Street)s are shown on the map. Others are listed on page 10. Employment size was determined using Reference USA's 2012 Business Database, 2011 Buffalo Business First Book of Lists and the NYSED Report Card.

**Map Layers:** Boundary files for the City of Buffalo, 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. Neighborhood boundaries drawn from a map created by the City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning, "Planning Neighborhoods and Census Tracts By Planning Community," available on the city's website at [http://www.ci.buffalo.ny.us/files/1\\_2\\_1/MapDesc/dd\\_panels\\_community.pdf](http://www.ci.buffalo.ny.us/files/1_2_1/MapDesc/dd_panels_community.pdf).

## 1.2 Executive Summary

**Population in poverty:** The 2007-11 American Community Survey is the source of data on individuals living in or near poverty. 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. The City of Buffalo (East of Main Street) total population is from the same source.

**Indicators and trends:** Indicators on urgent concerns, housing-related crises, and urgent needs for food are from a survey of at-risk residents in the community described in Data Sources and Notes Section 1.3. See the subsection on "The Most Vulnerable."

The NYS Department of Health supplied data on pregnancies by age group and by Zip Code.

The proportion of residents in higher paying jobs in the community is from the U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies OntheMap data tool.

High school drop out numbers are from the NYSED Report Card Database and reflect data from academic years end in 2010, 2011 and 2012.

All other analyses use census-track level data from 2007-11 American Community Survey.

**Landscape of human services:** A listing a human services providers comes from data compiled by the Mobile Safety-Net Team and Reference USA's 2012 Business Database. Employment at these organization's and agencies is primarily from Reference USA's 2012 Business Database.

**Barriers and systemic challenges:** The overall percentage of residents experiencing barriers is from a survey of at-risk residents in Buffalo (East of Main Street) described in Data Sources and Notes Section 1.3. See the subsection on "The Most Vulnerable." This survey was also the source of information on travel barriers, barriers created by confusing processes and households lacking health insurance.

Other barriers described in this section come from the 2007-11 American community Survey (educational attainment levels, households without a vehicle, use of public transit to get to work; home values and residential housing pattern by race); CrimeReports.com (violence crimes); focus groups with residents and providers and an interview with Buffalo Public School District leaders; and Buffalo Business First's 2013 Upstate New York School District Rankings.

## 1.3 Context for Action

### People in Need

**Individuals and Families:** Population and household counts are from the 2007-11 American Community Survey and reflect figures for City of Buffalo Census Tracts 1.10, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14.02, 15, 16, 17, 19, 23, 24, 25.05, 27.02, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33.01, 33.02, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39.01, 40.01, 41, 42, 43, 44.01, 44.02, 46.02, 47, 52.02, 163, 164, 166, 167, 168, and 170. These tracks wholly or partially east of Main Street in Buffalo.

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 Buffalo (East of Main Street) 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 community and region.

**Work and Income:** U.S. Census Bureau's Local Employment Dynamics data for 2010, available through the OnTheMap tool, was used to determine the number of higher- and lower-paying workers in Buffalo (East of Main Street) that reside within the community. Workers earning \$1,250 per month or less (less than or equal to \$15,00/year) are described as being in lower-paying jobs while those earning at least \$3,333 per month (about \$40,000/year) are described as being in higher-paying jobs. The analysis is based on 2011 data, the most current year available, and reflects primary jobs. A primary jobs is the individual's highest paying job for the year, and a count of primary jobs is the same as the count of all workers, so there isn't a double counting of jobs.

The community's top employers comes from several sources: NYSED 2012 Report Card database (employment at schools located east of Main Street); Buffalo Business First Book of Lists 2011, and Reference USA's Business Database.

Households by income level come were calculated using data from the 2007-11 American Community Survey. This was also the data source for median incomes, as provided by Social Explorer for all Census Tracts in Buffalo (East of Main Street) as well as Erie County as a whole.

**Poverty:** The 2006-11 American Community Survey is the source of data on individuals living in or near poverty. Income relative to poverty level is provided for individuals by age group, race/ethnicity, and family type. The map shows poverty rates by census block group.

NYS Department of Health was the source of birth data by Zip Code. Those considered for the analysis in this section include 14202, 14203, 14204, 14206, 14208, 14209, 14210, 14211, 14212, 14214, 14215, and 14220. These are Zip Codes that wholly or partially cover the community.

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.

**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 data for Math for 2011-12 is from the NYSED's 2012 School Report Card Database, providing performance data by school and by district for various categories of students, including by English proficiency and economic disadvantage. Student performing at levels 3 or 4 are described as meeting or exceeding standards.

Academic performance data for 2013 come from school and district data released by the Buffalo News as part of an article on August 8 entitled "Tougher exams significantly lower scores across Buffalo Niagara."

Graduation data is from a NYSED report entitled "Public School Total Cohort Graduation Rate and Enrollment Outcome Summary, 2011-12 School Year, offering school-level graduation outcomes for all schools across New York State. The NYSED's 2012 School Report Card Database was the source of drop-out data, while the number of suspensions is taken from a suspension report provided by district leaders during a meeting held in October 2013.

Information on Say Yes is from an interview with David Rust, Executive Director, as well as information released at the Say Yes Community Leadership Council Quarterly Meeting on August 7, 2013.

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

## The Most Vulnerable

414 adults residing in City of Buffalo (East of Main Street) Zip Codes 14202, 14203, 14204, 14206, 14208, 14209, 14210, 14211, 14212, 14214, 14215, 14218, 14220 completed a one-page questionnaire providing demographic and socioeconomic data as well as information on human services needs, concerns, benefits, and access barriers.

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 community, including Clinton Branch Library, Merriweather Library, Downtown Library, Delavan Branch Library, Cazenovia Library and Resource Center, Martha Mitchel Community Center Black History Month Event, Buffalo River Food Pantry

(inside Old First Ward Community Center), The Valley Community Center Food Pantry, The Valley Community Center Senior Group, BETC Tabling event at the Valley Community Center, BETC Job Fair (Downtown), Good Shepherd Episcopal Church Food Pantry, TJ Dulski Center Parent Night, Matt Urban Hope Center Urban Diner, Frederick Douglass Community Center Community Resource Event, Schiller Park Seniors, Fruit Belt Annual Night Out, Calvary Baptist Church Resource Fair, MOOT Senior Center, the Broadway Market Resource Fair, and Dorothy J. Collier Center/Friends to the Elderly.

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 community. Because the survey captured only those residents who are able to physically get to these locations, 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.

Survey data were coded by the Mobile Safety-Net Team and analyzed by the University at Buffalo Regional Institute. The 414 surveys represent a sample for the community's vulnerable population that is statistically significant with a confidence level of 95% and with a confidence interval of 5. Surveys completed by household representatives who reported a Zip Codes corresponding to an area outside the City of Buffalo (East of Main Street) were not included in the analysis.

Not all survey respondents answered every survey question. The question soliciting information on number of children had the lowest level of responses, with 151 answering this question. This number of responses still represents a sample size far exceeding the 96 or more responses needed to obtain a statistically significant sample size for Buffalo (East of Main Street) at-risk population within a 95% confidence interval +/- 10%.

The 76% 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 particularly survey question, which may be less than the full sample.

## Places in Need

**Housing:** Housing costs as a percentage of income for renters and owners come from the 2007-11 American Community Survey. Costs include mortgages, second mortgages, rent, utilities (electricity, gas, water, sewer), homeowners insurance and property taxes. 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 2007-11 American Community Survey was also the source of information on home values and rents in the community and across Erie County.

Residential and business vacancies calculated using data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Vacant Address Data.

Median housing costs by Zip Code for both renters and homeowners are from the same source.

Other information in this section comes from focus groups with residents and provider interviews and input, including that offered at a roll-out of report draft on January 9 at Gerard Place.

**Transportation:** Vehicle access data for households and workers in the City of Buffalo (West) are from the 2006-11 American Community Survey. 1

Public transit times are calculated from Koons Avenue on the East Side of Buffalo to various destinations in and beyond the City of Buffalo which estimates travel time based on mode of travel and time of day. One-way travel times include walk times to bus stops.

**Crime:** City-wide crime data is from the U.S. Department of Justice's Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics. Rates of crime for both the City of Buffalo and surrounding municipalities reflect violent offenses (murder, manslaughter, rape, robbery and aggravated assaults) and property crime, along with population totals.

Crime data for Buffalo (East of Main Street) is from CrimeReport.com and reflects only violent incidences reported by the Buffalo Police Department between January 16, 2013 and July 15, 2013 (the only time periods available for downloading). Violence

incidences include homicides, robberies, sexual offenses and assaults. Each incident was mapped at the center of the street block the crime occurred. Counts of violent incidences at the neighborhood level were determined by overlaying neighborhood boundary files with this data.

## 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 the community are included in this listing for the purpose of analyzing what supports residents have access to within the community

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 at the senior centers). Alternatively, they may have significant programming for these populations.

Service categories are defined as follows:

**Food** – includes food pantries, mobile markets and places where free meals are provided as well as organizations and agencies offering connection points for food access such as the Erie County Department of Social Services where the SNAP program is administered.

**Clothing** – includes clothes closet and sites where free clothing is available, as well as programs providing emergency clothing. Includes organizations offering only specific kinds of clothing such as that needed for work.

**Education/Training** – includes places of formal education as well as sites for job training, GED, ESL, literacy skills, community/continuing education, and parenting training.

**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 rental assistance, utility assistance, weatherization, emergency housing repair, and HEAP. Also includes organizations working to expand options for affordable housing.

**Transportation** – includes organizations that offer transportation via buses, vans and shuttles, as part of the suite of services they regularly provide. Also includes agencies offering transportation supports as part of other regular programming.

**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 providing health services, preventive medical exams and/or screening, particularly for lower-income or vulnerable populations. 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 victims of domestic violence or the elderly.

**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. Includes programs for limited vulnerable populations.

**Crime/Juvenile** – includes crime prevention programs, juvenile justice, and victim assistance programs (such as the domestic violence services.) Does not include safety classes or crime prevention awareness.

**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.

## Models to Consider

Information and data were gathered from a variety of online sources, and has been supplemented with telephone conversations with leaders at these organizations, agencies and school districts, where possible.

# 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?

- Yes<sup>1</sup>
- No<sup>2</sup>

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

- Utility shut-off notice<sup>1</sup>
- Foreclosure / eviction<sup>2</sup>
- Homelessness<sup>3</sup>
- No money for food<sup>4</sup>
- Domestic violence<sup>5</sup>
- No urgent concerns<sup>6</sup>
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_<sup>7</sup>

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.)?

- Yes<sup>1</sup>
- No<sup>2</sup>

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

- Traveling to get services is difficult<sup>1</sup>
- I don't speak / read English well<sup>2</sup>
- I can't get there during the hours the agency is open<sup>3</sup>
- I've been turned away because of income limits<sup>4</sup>
- It can be physically difficult for me to leave my home<sup>5</sup>
- It's too much of a hassle because the process is confusing<sup>6</sup>
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_<sup>7</sup>

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

- Employed full-time<sup>1</sup>
- Employed part-time<sup>2</sup>
- Unemployed, looking<sup>3</sup>
- Unemployed, not looking<sup>4</sup>
- Student<sup>5</sup>
- Retired<sup>6</sup>
- Disabled<sup>7</sup>
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_<sup>8</sup>

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

- Employment<sup>1</sup>
- Unemployment insurance<sup>2</sup>
- Public assistance<sup>3</sup>
- Social Security<sup>4</sup>
- Pension<sup>5</sup>
- Disability<sup>6</sup>
- Worker's compensation<sup>7</sup>
- Child Support<sup>8</sup>
- No Income<sup>9</sup>
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_<sup>10</sup>

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

What is your primary form of transportation?

- Bicycle<sup>1</sup>
- Family / Friends<sup>2</sup>
- Own vehicle<sup>3</sup>
- Taxi<sup>4</sup>
- Public Transportation<sup>5</sup>
- Walk<sup>6</sup>
- Car Share Service<sup>7</sup>
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_<sup>8</sup>

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 expensive<sup>1</sup>
- Takes too long to get places<sup>2</sup>
- No service to where I need to go<sup>3</sup>
- No evening or weekend service<sup>4</sup>
- Buses don't run often enough<sup>5</sup>
- It's too long to walk to bus stop<sup>6</sup>
- Service isn't reliable<sup>7</sup>
- I don't feel safe<sup>8</sup>
- Schedule is too confusing<sup>9</sup>
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_<sup>10</sup>

# Appendix B - Resident Questionnaire (Continued)

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

- Employed full-time<sup>1</sup>
- Employed part-time<sup>2</sup>
- Unemployed, looking<sup>3</sup>
- Unemployed, not looking<sup>4</sup>
- Student<sup>5</sup>
- Retired<sup>6</sup>
- Disabled<sup>7</sup>
- Not Applicable / No other adults in household<sup>8</sup>
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_<sup>9</sup>

What is your current living situation?

- Own<sup>1</sup>
- Rent, with assistance<sup>2</sup>
- Rent, without assistance<sup>3</sup>
- Staying with friend / family<sup>4</sup>
- Homeless<sup>5</sup>
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_<sup>6</sup>

How long have you lived at your current address?

- Less than 3 mos.<sup>1</sup>
- 3 mos. – 1 year<sup>2</sup>
- 1-5 years<sup>3</sup>
- 6 - 10 years<sup>4</sup>
- More than 10 years<sup>5</sup>

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

- High School / GED<sup>1</sup>
- Some College<sup>2</sup>
- College Degree (2-yr or 4-yr)<sup>3</sup>
- Post-graduate degree<sup>4</sup>
- Military<sup>5</sup>
- Trade School<sup>6</sup>
- Did not finish high school<sup>7</sup>

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

- Yes, one or more adults do not have health insurance<sup>1</sup>
- Yes, one or more children do not have health insurance<sup>2</sup>
- No, we all have health insurance<sup>3</sup>

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

- Private insurance<sup>1</sup>
- Managed care (HMO, PPO)<sup>2</sup>
- Medicare (65+, disabled)<sup>3</sup>
- Medicaid<sup>4</sup>
- Government (VA, Child Health Plus, Family Health Plus)<sup>5</sup>
- Health Savings Account<sup>6</sup>
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_<sup>7</sup>
- Do not know/Unsure<sup>8</sup>
- Do not have health insurance<sup>9</sup>

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

- Food stamps<sup>1</sup>
- Medicaid<sup>2</sup>
- Cash benefits<sup>3</sup>
- HEAP<sup>4</sup>
- SSI / SSD<sup>5</sup>
- WIC<sup>6</sup>
- Other \_\_\_\_\_<sup>7</sup>
- None<sup>8</sup>

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

- Food stamps<sup>1</sup>
- Medicaid<sup>2</sup>
- Cash benefits<sup>3</sup>
- HEAP<sup>4</sup>
- SSI / SSD<sup>5</sup>
- WIC<sup>6</sup>
- Other \_\_\_\_\_<sup>7</sup>
- None<sup>8</sup>

***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!***

## Appendix C - Poster for Focus Group at Friends to the Elderly

# We Need You!



This is your opportunity to have your voice heard and tell us how your community in Buffalo could be a stronger one for **seniors**.



Join the conversation

FRIDAY  
**SEPT. 13th**  
AT 12:30-1:30PM

Friends to the Elderly  
118 E. Utica Street  
Buffalo, NY 14209



**Refreshments will be served.**

This conversation is being sponsored by the Mobile Safety-Net Team in partnership with the University at Buffalo. The purpose is to gather insights from residents in the City of Buffalo to inform recommendations and strategies on ways of making Buffalo a stronger community for individuals and families.

For more information, call 854-3494.



# Appendix D - Parent and Younger Adult Focus Group Tool



What are the most critical human support needs facing you and your family?

Most Critical Need

2nd Biggest Need

3rd Biggest Need

- \_\_\_\_\_ Child Care
- \_\_\_\_\_ Counseling and Treatment
- \_\_\_\_\_ Financial/Budgeting/Taxes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Food/Nutrition
- \_\_\_\_\_ Health
- \_\_\_\_\_ Housing
- \_\_\_\_\_ Jobs/Training
- \_\_\_\_\_ Legal
- \_\_\_\_\_ Referrals/Information
- \_\_\_\_\_ Safety/Crime
- \_\_\_\_\_ Senior Activities
- \_\_\_\_\_ Transportation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Youth Programs

Tell Us About Yourself

- How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is your gender?  Male  Female
- How many people, including yourself, do you live with? \_\_\_\_\_
- How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is your Zip Code? \_\_\_\_\_

A COMMUNITY REPORT  
City of **BUFFALO**  
(EAST OF MAIN STREET)

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 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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