A Mobile Safety Net Team initiative established by The John R. Oishei Foundation

CITY AND TOWN OF Lockport

MARCH 2020

12,500+ live in or near poverty

Since 2011, poverty decreased by 15%, while total population decreased by 2%.

Numbers in Need
IN BUFFALO NIAGARA

Prepared by UB Regional Institute
School of Architecture and Planning
**COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT**

**MARCH 2020**

**City and Town of Lockport**

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**About this Report**

This report offers a snapshot of findings for the City and Town of Lockport (Lockport), with new data on the community’s population that lives in or near poverty. It includes the perspectives of human services providers, the landscape of providers, and strategies that could strengthen the safety-net for individuals and families.

Research in this report was led by the University at Buffalo Regional Institute in partnership with the Mobile Safety-Net Team. It was commissioned by The John R. Oishei Foundation. This work updates and expands upon a community report completed by the research team in 2012.

**Defining Need**

Over 12,500 residents in Lockport live in or near poverty with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty line.

The federal poverty line (FPL) is $12,490 for a household of one, $16,910 for a two-person household, $21,330 for a family of three, and $25,750 for a family of four. A single parent of two who works full-time, year-round at the minimum wage in NYS ($11.10 per hour or $23,088 a year) earns an income just above the FPL in 2019.

The FPL is adjusted annually by the federal government and varies by household size. It is often used to determine eligibility for programs that assist individuals and families with basic living expenses such as food, utilities, and rental housing. Households with incomes that exceed 200% of the FPL (up to $51,500 for a family of four) generally do not meet income guidelines for most programs.

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**Federal Poverty Guidelines, 2019**

- **Federal Poverty Level**
- **200% of Federal Poverty Level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Size</th>
<th>1 Person Household</th>
<th>2 Person</th>
<th>3 Person</th>
<th>4 Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FPL</strong></td>
<td>$12,490</td>
<td>$16,910</td>
<td>$21,330</td>
<td>$25,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>200% FPL</strong></td>
<td>$24,980</td>
<td>$33,820</td>
<td>$42,660</td>
<td>$51,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

**Visit NumbersInNeed.org**

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**Numbers in Need**

| Community Snapshot: City and Town of Lockport, March 2020 | 2 |
Community Snapshot

This report, Community Snapshot, presents an overview of findings from the research in this community, with new data and information on the people living in or near poverty, their barriers to programs and services, the landscape of service providers, and strategies for strengthening the community so that all residents can thrive economically. This report draws from more detailed findings available on the Numbers in Need website, as well as from Insights from Residents and Insights from Providers. Agency and community leaders can use this report to understand key findings and identify topics for further exploring.

Insights from Residents

Insights from Residents presents a more detailed look at the community's vulnerable populations, their needs, urgent concerns, and barriers to programs and services. A survey of residents and conversations with residents inform findings in this report. Agency and community leaders can use this document as they develop programs and services that respond to the needs of residents and remove barriers to jobs, programs and services faced by residents.

Insights from Providers

Insights from Providers explores the perspectives of service providers in the community with respect to gaps in the landscape of services, barriers to reaching residents, promising developments, and strategies for strengthening the landscape of programs and services. A focus group with agency leaders informed the findings presented in this document. Agency and community leaders can use this report to shape programs and services that respond to identified gaps and barriers, while leveraging system strengths and promising developments.

Visit us online at NumbersInNeed.org

NumbersInNeed.org is an online tool that leaders can use to understand economically vulnerable populations in the Buffalo Niagara Region, their urgent needs and concerns, barriers to services and factors that matter such as access to good paying jobs, educational attainment, and transportation options. The website features individual stories, community and regional indicators, interactive lists and maps of service providers, strategies for strengthening communities and models to consider.
Among the total population of 40,898...

13% ARE IN POVERTY

5,121 live on incomes below the federal poverty level.

+ 19% ARE NEAR POVERTY

7,466 aren’t in poverty but are close to it with incomes between 100%-200% of poverty.

32% ARE IN OR NEAR POVERTY

12,587 residents are doing poorly or struggling financially.

Nearly 12,600 Lockport residents live in or near poverty. That’s about a third of the population.

Over 5,100 individuals in Lockport live in poverty. That represents 13% of the total population—a slightly lower poverty rate than the region overall (15%). But many other residents also struggle financially. Nearly 7,500 live near poverty, or on incomes between 100% and 200% of the federal poverty line. Poverty is most concentrated in the City of Lockport, particularly neighborhoods near downtown and to the north and west of the City, extending into the southwestern part of town. In most of these neighborhoods, the percentage of residents living in or near poverty increased since 2011. However, the total number of Lockport residents living in or near poverty declined nearly 5% over that time.
Poverty, Need and Economic Vulnerability

Since 2011, almost 1,000 fewer residents live in or near poverty in Lockport. The percentage of people living in poverty dropped from 15% to 13% between 2011 and 2017, while the percentage of people living near poverty held steady at 19%.

Married couples with children rarely live in poverty. Meanwhile, a third of single-parent households live in poverty. Single parents face additional challenges that exacerbate poverty, such as a single income, childcare costs, food costs, housing costs and more. One in five young adults in Lockport (ages 25 to 34) is also affected by poverty, a rate higher than the region overall.

However, these percentages do not tell the whole story. The 13% of children under 18 living in poverty represents 1,641 children. In comparison, 630 single parents live in poverty. Over 1,000 young adults between the ages of 25 and 34 live in poverty in Lockport, the second-highest number in poverty among vulnerable populations after children under 18.

About a third of all single parents and 13% of children are in poverty. Young adults experience higher rates of poverty than any other group besides single parents.

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Vulnerable Populations In Poverty, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Group</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41,570</td>
<td>40,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near Poverty</td>
<td>7,547</td>
<td>7,466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Poverty</td>
<td>5,989</td>
<td>5,121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In or Near Poverty</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Population and Population In or Near Poverty, 2011 and 2017


Factors That Matter

Niagara County’s manufacturing jobs declined over the last few decades, but the community’s largest employer is still a General Motors components manufacturing plant. Aside from manufacturing, the top employers are in healthcare, education, tourism, and retail.

Out of Lockport’s 16,784 jobs, 38% pay $40,000 per year or more, a slightly smaller percentage than the region overall. One way residents can improve their incomes is through training and education. Only 23% of residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher, but the median income for those with a bachelor’s degree is 41% higher than the median income for those with a high school diploma.

Most lower-income households spend nearly a third or more of their income on housing. However, homeowners are slightly more likely to face this burden than renters in Lockport, opposite of the trend in many other communities.

A majority of residents drive a car to get around. But as residents age, they are less likely to own a car. Residents who do not drive are far more likely to rely on carpooling than other means.

Community Data
Visit us online at NumbersInNeed.org

Explore more about this community and others in Buffalo Niagara through interactive features and stories.
Population In or Near Poverty, 2017

- 0%-25%
- 26%-50%
- 51%-75%
- 76%-100%

Providers


The Landscape of Providers

59 SERVICE PROVIDERS in the City and Town of Lockport

See more online Visit NumbersInNeed.org to view additional maps and the listing of service providers.

Types of services provided, by %

- 56% Education/Training
- 41% Mental Health/Addiction
- 36% Youth Programs
- 29% Health/Wellness
- 25% Homeless Services
- 20% Food
- 15% Info/Referral
- 10% Housing/Utility
- 8% Veterans
- 7% Seniors
- 7% Clothing
- 7% Financial Literacy
- 7% Crime/Juvenile
- 5% Transportation
- 3% Legal
- 2% Teen Parents
With many households without a vehicle, and limited public transportation access, Lockport needs more transportation services.

Three different organizations in Lockport provide transportation services—the City of Lockport Youth and Recreation Department, New Directions Youth and Family Services at Wyndham Lawn, and the Niagara County Office for the Aging. These agencies provide transportation for youth or seniors, but transportation services are limited for the general public except for those covered by Medicaid. Most providers are more than a quarter mile from the nearest NFTA bus stop, and bus routes are fairly limited with long travel times. Providing more reliable, low-cost transportation options in Lockport can help residents access key services, especially for the over 1,500 households in the community without access to a vehicle.

Although education is the most common type of service offered in the community, training options are limited for adults.

Educational services are offered at 33 sites in Lockport, but the majority of these programs are for youth. The City of Lockport School District is a great resource for children in the community, but adult courses are limited. Other educational services for youth include Head Start and BOCES programs. Mental health providers, such as Horizon Health Services, also offer education as part of their services. Formal education and training for adults is available at a few sites, including Literacy New York Buffalo-Niagara, and Niagara’s WorkSource One. This gives Lockport more adult education resources than other communities, but additional workforce training options that prepares adult students for career advancement and higher-paying jobs could help the nearly 12,000 adults in Lockport without a college education improve their job prospects and earning potential.
What has happened over the past five years?

Lockport continues to have a sizable number of providers to help more residents climb out of poverty and achieve economic self-sufficiency. The programs and services offered by the community’s 59 providers create a particularly strong safety net of services for vulnerable populations such as youth, seniors, and families with lower incomes.

A conversation with providers suggests a range of efforts could help continue the decline in the number of residents living in or near poverty. These include expanding transportation options, increasing job opportunities, providing more affordable childcare services, raising awareness of existing resources, and reaching out directly to residents to promote underutilized services like mental health counseling.

Providers spoke positively about recent developments that are strengthening Lockport’s landscape of social services. These include: a new mobile application to connect residents with services, expanded mental health services and recreational programs for youth, and recently opened workforce training providers.

<-  Available online at NumbersInNeed.org

Strengths of the System

About 60 service providers are located in Lockport. Every type of service is available in Lockport, and nearly a third of providers offer at least four types of services.

Mental health services are a unique asset. An agency focus group identified mental health as a strength of Lockport’s service landscape. Mental health or addiction services are available at 24 sites in Lockport, including local schools.

More than half of providers offer education programs for children or adults. An agency focus group also identified education as the top strength in Lockport’s social services landscape. Thirty-three providers in Lockport offer education, and most of these programs are for youth. However, unlike many similar communities, Lockport does have adult education providers.

Gaps

Lockport has a need for additional transportation options. Transportation is Lockport’s greatest service gap, according to an agency focus group. Just three organizations in Lockport offer transportation services.

Both providers and residents said affordable housing is one of the community’s top needs. Despite Lockport’s relatively low housing costs, many are still cost burdened.

Limited childcare options can turn common challenges into heavy burdens. Providers described how the declining number of childcare providers in Lockport creates barriers to employment, healthcare, and other resources for parents and their children.

Lockport needs a wider range of high-paying job opportunities. Although Lockport has workforce trainers, providers say trainees have a hard time finding good-paying jobs in the community.

Barriers

Mental health services are underutilized. While Lockport has several mental health providers, many residents may be unwilling to use them because of a negative stigma associated with mental health.

Lack of information sharing leads to confusion around existing programs, so many residents do not use services. Vulnerable populations are often unaware of existing services and opportunities for financial assistance.

Critical health needs go untreated due to high costs. Nearly all residents surveyed have health insurance, but 41% said they have healthcare needs that they cannot afford.

Residents in need often do not meet income eligibility requirements for assistance. Income eligibility requirements are the most common barrier to services in Lockport, based on a resident survey. Providers also saw this as a challenge.

Promising Developments

The community is leveraging technology to better promote services. The Grigg Lewis Foundation turned its printed Lockport Family Resource Guide into a free mobile application to help connect more residents with services.

Adult education is a growing community strength. Orleans-Niagara BOCES and Literacy New York Buffalo-Niagara expanded services in Lockport in 2019. Providers said these resources, along with existing trainers, are a critical asset.

Youth recreational programs are expanding. Providers were encouraged by grassroots efforts to fill the gap in affordable youth programs.

The Lockport City School District is expanding mental health services. The district recently developed a district-wide plan that provides a curriculum action plan and tools for school counselors and other providers to address mental health concerns.
Survey Results of Economically Vulnerable Residents

138 residents in need took the survey.

A quarter of residents surveyed had an urgent concern about something in their lives. Residents are most concerned with being able to afford food, followed by outstanding debt and utility shut-offs.

More than three quarters of respondent households earn less than $36,000 per year. Residents may have taken on debt to pay for necessities like food and utilities because their incomes are insufficient to cover these costs. Residents with financial challenges mostly deal with consumer/credit card debt, medical bills, and student loans.

The second-most frequent barrier to services for respondents is difficulty traveling. Even though almost a third of respondents use an alternative mode of transportation, only two percent of respondents use public transit as their primary way of getting around. Some residents see public transit as an impractical method of transportation. Lockport has only two NFTA bus routes with limited destinations and hours of operation.

Read more Insights from Residents

A detailed report exploring the community’s vulnerable populations, their needs, urgent concerns and barriers to support services.

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26% TOP 3 URGENT CONCERNS REPORTED BY THESE RESIDENTS

- No Money for Food
- Outstanding Debt
- Utility Shut-Off

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HEALTH CARE NEEDS

Despite the prevalence of health insurance coverage, many residents still need medical care they cannot afford, possibly because some care is not covered by insurance or co-pays are too high.

- 40% of vulnerable residents are in need of some type of healthcare but can’t afford it.

TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

As in many communities in rural areas, Lockport residents commonly drive where they need to go. Still, 31% of respondents do not usually drive. Rather, those without a car often walk or bike. Only a small percentage take public transit, indicating that transit may be inconvenient or inviable for many residents.

- How respondents get around:
  - Own Vehicle: 69%
  - Bike/Walk: 21%
  - Family/Friends: 9%
  - Taxi/Rideshare/Medicaid Van/Volunteer Service: 6%
  - Public Transportation: 2%
  - Other: 1%

FINANCIAL NEEDS

Forty-three percent of respondents are dealing with financial concerns. When income is not enough, residents may take on debt to deal with necessary expenses or emergencies.

- Top 5 Financial Challenges in Household:
  - Consumer/credit card debt: 57%
  - Medical bills: 46%
  - Student loan debt: 38%
  - Other: 23%
  - No bank account: 16%
Enhance career pipelines for youth into good-paying jobs in the skilled trades that do not require a four-year college degree.

Nearly 25,000 young adults without children in Buffalo Niagara live in or near poverty. While 11% of them have dropped out of high school, an even higher percentage—36%—have a college education, perhaps in a field where there is a surplus of graduates and limited job opportunities. Insights from residents suggest that a high school diploma alone does not equip youth with the skills needed to find good-paying jobs. Meanwhile, employers in industries like manufacturing and clean energy report hard-to-fill higher paying jobs in the trades, many of which require skills and training beyond high school but not a four year college degree. Training programs that prepare students for in-demand, higher-paying jobs that do not require a college degree can lead young adults to rewarding careers.

Potential Action Steps
Develop a career mentoring and internship program for teens through the local chamber of commerce or industry association.
Consider developing a YES (Youth Engaged in Service) program that offers teens out-of-school volunteer opportunities where they cultivate job skills through service learning.
Engage area employers in sponsoring in-classroom speakers, facility tours, internships, externships, and career mentors for students.
Raise awareness among students of the longer term, higher paying job opportunities and skilled training offered by unions and apprenticeship programs.

Potential Actors in the Community
Workforce development organizations
Public school districts
Community colleges
BOCES
Business community and industry organizations
NYS Department of Labor and other government agencies
Economic and community development organizations

Models to Consider
BEGREEN P-TECH
Buffalo and Alfred, NY
buffaloschools.org

Town of Amherst Youth Engaged in Service
(YES)
Amherst, NY
amherstyes.org

The following strategies and models are only examples of all the possible solutions to this community's challenges. Please visit NumbersInNeed.org to view a more comprehensive collection of strategies and models that cover a broader range of topics.

See more online
Visit NumbersinNeed.org to view a more comprehensive collection of strategies and models that cover a broader range of topics.
Regional Strategies and Models to Consider, cont’d.

Expand options for quality affordable housing, including homeownership, in neighborhoods of high opportunity.

Over 133,000 households in Buffalo Niagara spend over 30% of their income on housing. Well over half (57%) of these cost burdened households are renters. This problem is particularly pressing in communities with relatively high, and growing, rental costs. Although rents in Buffalo Niagara are much lower than the US overall, a minimum wage worker would need to spend nearly 40% of their gross monthly income (not including taxes) to afford the region’s median rent of $772. Insights from residents and providers show that many households often forgo food, utilities, or healthcare to pay rent and are unable to build any savings. Providing financial and other assistance to cost burdened households can lead to economic security and enhanced opportunities.

Potential Action Steps

Strengthen pathways to home ownership for low-income families while removing barriers to loans.

Expand access to financial literacy programs, savings incentives, and affordable home supports.

Increase access to land for growing food, especially in residential areas that are food insecure.

Promote weatherization and housing rehabilitation programs.

Explore partnerships that may enable PUSH Green to expand energy efficiency programs for homeowners to new communities beyond Buffalo.

Increase safety and neighborhood livability through the promotion and strengthening of block clubs.

Potential Actors in the Community

Housing and homeless service providers
Elected officials and policymakers
Private and not-for-profit developers
Block clubs
Food and agriculture service providers
Financial education service providers
Financial institutions

Models to Consider

Tiny Homes
Rochester and Syracuse, NY and Chico, CA
atinyhomeforgood.org

Vacant to Value
Baltimore, MD
www.vacantstovalue.org
Defining Need, Page 2
Minimum Wage: New York State Department of Labor, Minimum Wage (effective 12/31/18).

Poverty Map, Page 4

Poverty, Need, and Economic Vulnerability, Page 5

Factors that Matter, Page 6
Top employers were first downloaded from ReferenceUSA and mapped to confirm location within the boundaries of the 12 communities. Top businesses by number of employees were cross-referenced with the Buffalo Business First Book of Lists (2018) to ensure accuracy in number of employees at the business location, when available.

Education: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2017. All income by education numbers are actual medians except those for graduate or professional degrees; these have been calculated by weighted averages of the medians, because combined medians were not available via Social Explorer.

Housing: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2017. Low-income households in this instance are defined as households with incomes below $35,000/year.


In 2017, NYS passed Raise the Age legislation that deals with non-felony offenses committed by 16- and 17-year olds outside of the criminal justice system. The law went into effect for 16 year olds on October 1, 2018 and will be effective for 17 year olds on October 1, 2019. While this law did not affect the juvenile arrest data shown in this report, it may affect trends in future years, beginning in 2018.

The Landscape of Providers, Page 7
Provider Data: Information submitted by agency providers through a provider questionnaire updated a listing of providers developed for the 2012 community report for Lockport. Providers provided information on program and service locations, agency location, geographic scope and more. Most service providers are not-for-profit and public sector providers.
Tax records available through the IRS and National Center for Charitable Statistics were used to identify new not-for-profits with locations in the community since 2012.

Provider Services and Needs of Residents, Page 8
Provider Data: See note for page 6.

Opportunities and Challenges for Providers, Page 9
Insights from Providers, City and Town of Lockport, March 2020. Provider insights come from an agency focus group held in October 2019 with eleven provider representatives.

Survey Results of Economically Vulnerable Residents, Page 10
Insights from Residents, City and Town of Lockport, March 2020. Survey findings come from 138 surveys completed at thirteen locations and online from July through October 2019.

Strategies and Models to Consider
Young adults without children living in or near poverty: UBRI analysis of data from IPUMS, American Community Survey, 2012-2016 5-year estimates, University of Minnesota, 2016.
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City and Town of Lockport
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