

COMMUNITY

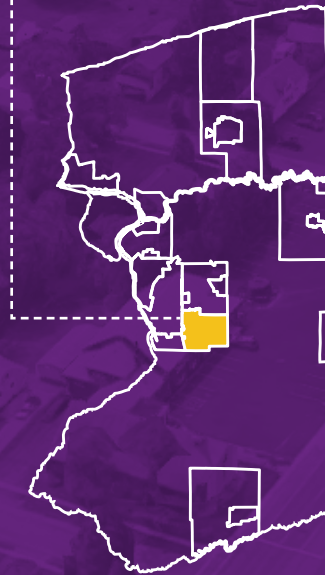
SNAPSHOT

9,000+
live in or near
poverty

TOWN OF
**West
Seneca**

APRIL 2020

Since 2011, the
**population in
poverty increased
by 17%**, while the
**total population
increased by 1%.**



**Numbers
in Need**

IN BUFFALO NIAGARA



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



Prepared by



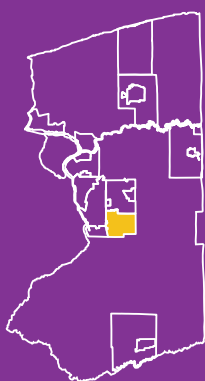
University at Buffalo

Regional Institute

School of Architecture and Planning

Town of West Seneca

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Numbers In Need is an initiative designed to strengthen the safety-net of human services in Buffalo Niagara communities that are most in need.

Visit NumbersInNeed.org

About this Report

This report offers a snapshot of findings for the Town of West Seneca, 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 2014.

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



Prepared by



University at Buffalo
Regional Institute
School of Architecture and Planning

Defining Need

Over 9,000 residents in West Seneca live in or near poverty with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty line.

The federal poverty line (FPL) is \$12,760 for a household of one, \$17,240 for a two-person household, \$21,720 for a family of three, and \$26,200 for a family of four. A single parent of two who works full-time, year-round at the minimum wage in NYS (\$11.80 per hour or \$24,544 per year) earns an income just above the FPL in 2020.

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 \$52,400 for a family of four) generally do not meet income guidelines for most programs.

Federal Poverty Guidelines, 2020

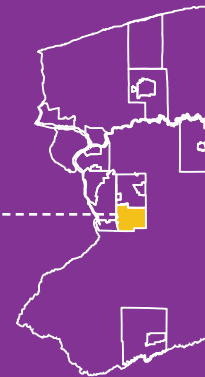
■ Federal Poverty Level
■ 200% of Federal Poverty Level



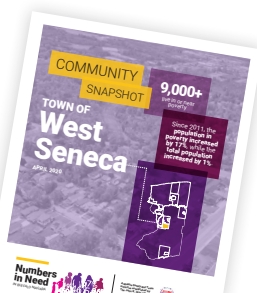
Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Reports for this Community

This report is part of a comprehensive suite of reports for the **Town of West Seneca**, one of 12 representative communities in the Buffalo Niagara region selected for assessment and investment as part of the Numbers in Need project.



Each of these reports for this community is available online at NumbersInNeed.org



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.



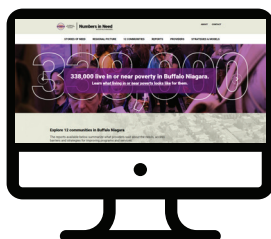
Insights from Residents

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.

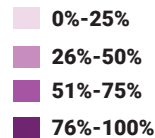


Visit us online at NumbersInNeed.org

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.

Population In or Near Poverty Across the Town of West Seneca

Population in or Near Poverty, 2017



Among the total population of 45,340

7% ARE IN POVERTY

3,154

live on incomes below the federal poverty level.



13% ARE NEAR POVERTY

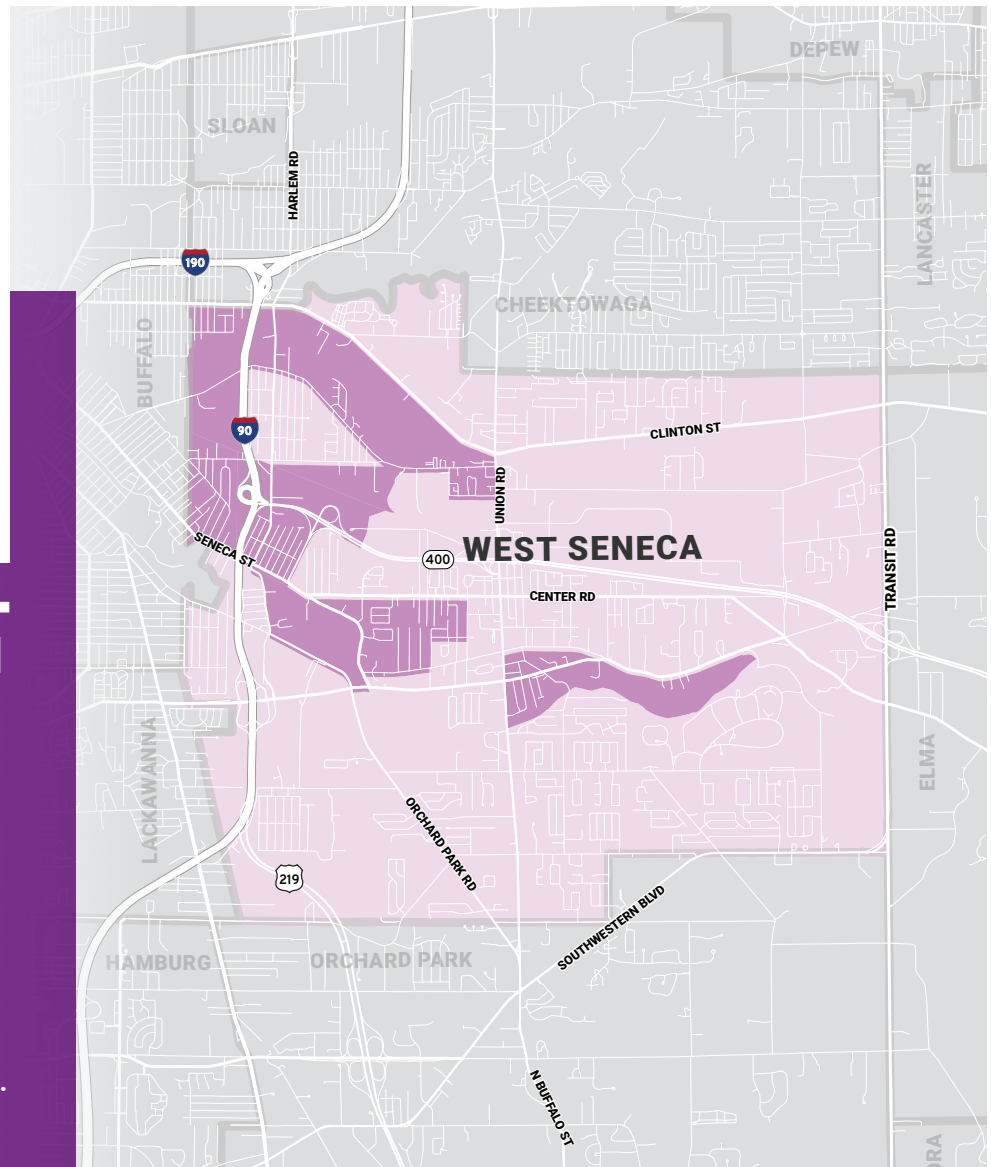
5,928

aren't in poverty but are close to it with incomes between 100%-200% of poverty.

20% ARE IN OR NEAR POVERTY

9,082

residents are doing poorly or struggling financially.



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2017.

One in five West Seneca residents live in or near poverty.

With 3,150 residents in poverty, West Seneca's poverty rate (7%) is below the regional average (15%). Still, many residents struggle financially—almost 6,000 live near poverty, or on incomes between 100% and 200% of the poverty line. Moreover, the poverty rate has increased in recent years, faster than the growth in the overall population. From 2011 to 2017, the number of West Seneca residents living in poverty increased by 17% (from 2,701 to 3,154), while the total population increased by only 1%. The number of residents living near poverty has remained about the same in both years.

Poverty is most prevalent in the northwestern part of West Seneca bordering Buffalo and Cheektowaga, where the number of residents living in or near poverty also increased the most between 2011 and 2017. There are pockets of poverty near the town center as well.

Poverty, Need and Economic Vulnerability

More residents live in or near poverty in West Seneca in 2017 than in 2011. The percentage of people living in poverty increased from 6% to 7% of the overall population between 2011 and 2017, while the percentage of people living near poverty held steady at 13%.

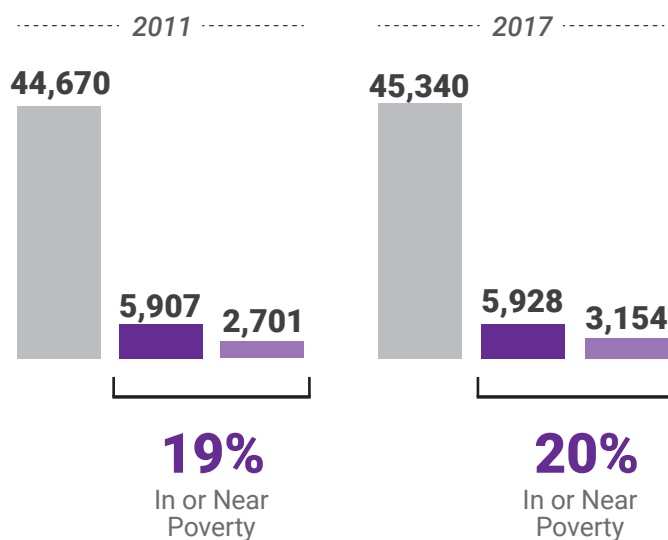
Of the community's vulnerable populations, married couples with children are by far the least likely to live in poverty, followed closely by refugees and immigrants. Meanwhile, a fifth of single-parent households live in poverty. Single parents face additional challenges that exacerbate poverty, such as a single income, childcare costs, food costs, and housing costs. Due to the high poverty rate among single parents, children under the age of 18 also have a higher poverty rate than other vulnerable populations.

However, these percentages do not tell the whole story. The 7% of seniors living in poverty represents 280 seniors, slightly more than the 277 residents who make up the 20% of single parents living in poverty. Children have the highest number living in poverty among vulnerable populations in West Seneca, with 764 children under the age of 18 living in poverty. Young adults between the ages of 25 and 34 have the second highest number, with 469 young adults living in poverty in West Seneca.

While the number of residents living in poverty increased by 17% between 2011 and 2017, the number near poverty stayed about the same.

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

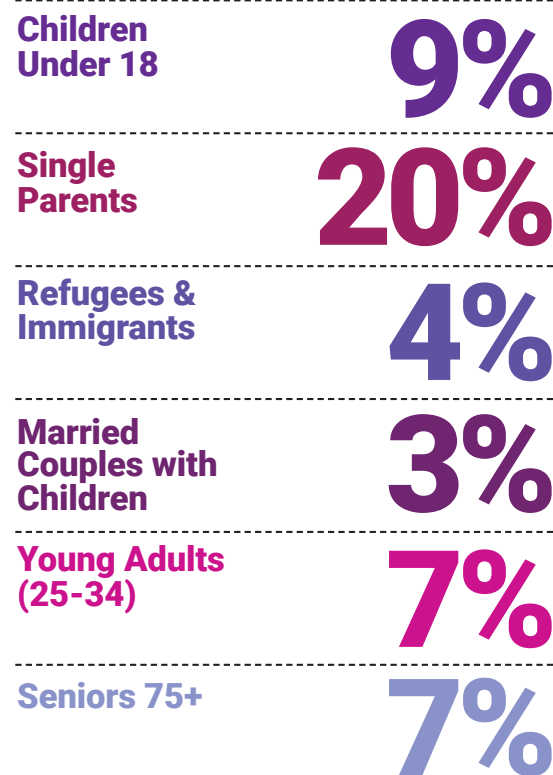
Population: ■ Total ■ Near Poverty ■ In Poverty



Source: American Community Survey, 2007-11 5-Year Estimates; American Community Survey, 2013-17 5-Year Estimates

In West Seneca, married couples with children rarely live in poverty, but a fifth of single parents do. Nearly one in ten children under the age of 18 live in poverty.

Vulnerable Populations In Poverty, 2017



Source: American Community Survey, 2017 5-Year Estimates.

Factors That Matter

While many West Seneca residents commute to the City of Buffalo or elsewhere in the region for work, there are job opportunities available in a variety of industries in the town, including education, manufacturing, retail, construction, and logistics.

About 60% of the jobs in West Seneca pay less than \$40,000 per year, however. One way residents can increase their income is through training and education. Only 28% of adults over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher, but the median income for those with a bachelor's degree is about 40% higher than the median income for those with a high school diploma.

Most lower-income households are housing cost-burdened. Nearly three-quarters of renters and two-thirds of homeowners spend at least 30% of their income on housing.

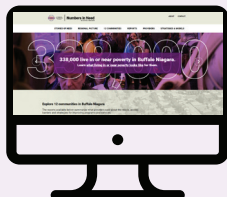
A majority of residents use a car to get around. But as residents age, they are significantly less likely to own a car. Residents who do not drive are far more likely to rely on carpooling than other means of transportation.

While the violent crime rate has not changed much since 2011, the property crime rate has been cut in half. Juvenile arrests have also declined since 2013.

Community Data

Visit us online at
NumbersInNeed.org

Explore more about this community and others in Buffalo Niagara through interactive features and stories.



WORK AND INCOME

The top ten employers account for 20% of all jobs in West Seneca and generate job opportunities for residents in education, manufacturing, retail, construction, and logistics.

Top 10 Employers, 2019

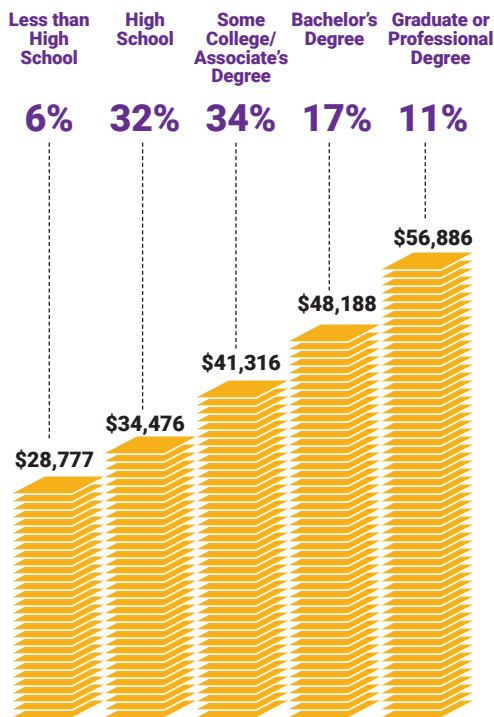
- | | |
|---|--|
| #1 West Seneca Central School District | #6 Certo Brothers Distributing Co |
| #2 Multisorb Technologies Inc. | #7 Tops Friendly Market |
| #3 Wegmans | #8 Mayer Brothers |
| #4 Erie 1 BOCES | #9 Jack Cooper Transport |
| #5 Union Concrete & Construction | #10 Home Depot |

Source: InfoGroup, ReferenceUSA Business Database, 2019; Buffalo Business First, Book of Lists, 2018.

EDUCATION

38% of residents have a high school diploma or less, which limits their earning potential.

Educational Attainment and Median Earnings of Adults Age 25+, 2017

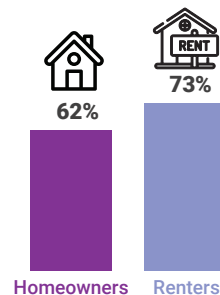


Source: American Community Survey, 2017 5-Year Estimates.

HOUSING

Low-income renters are more likely than homeowners to be cost-burdened.

% Lower-Income Households (earning less than \$35k/yr) that are Cost-Burdened, 2017



Source: American Community Survey, 2017 5-Year Estimates.

TRANSPORTATION

Residents of retirement age are twice as likely as younger adults to be without a vehicle.

% of Residents Without a Vehicle

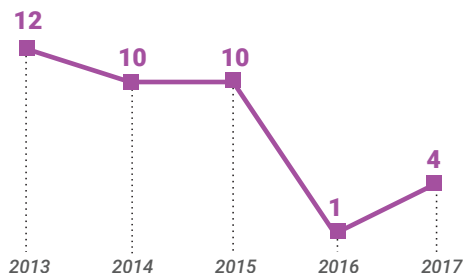


Source: American Community Survey, 2017 5-Year Estimates.

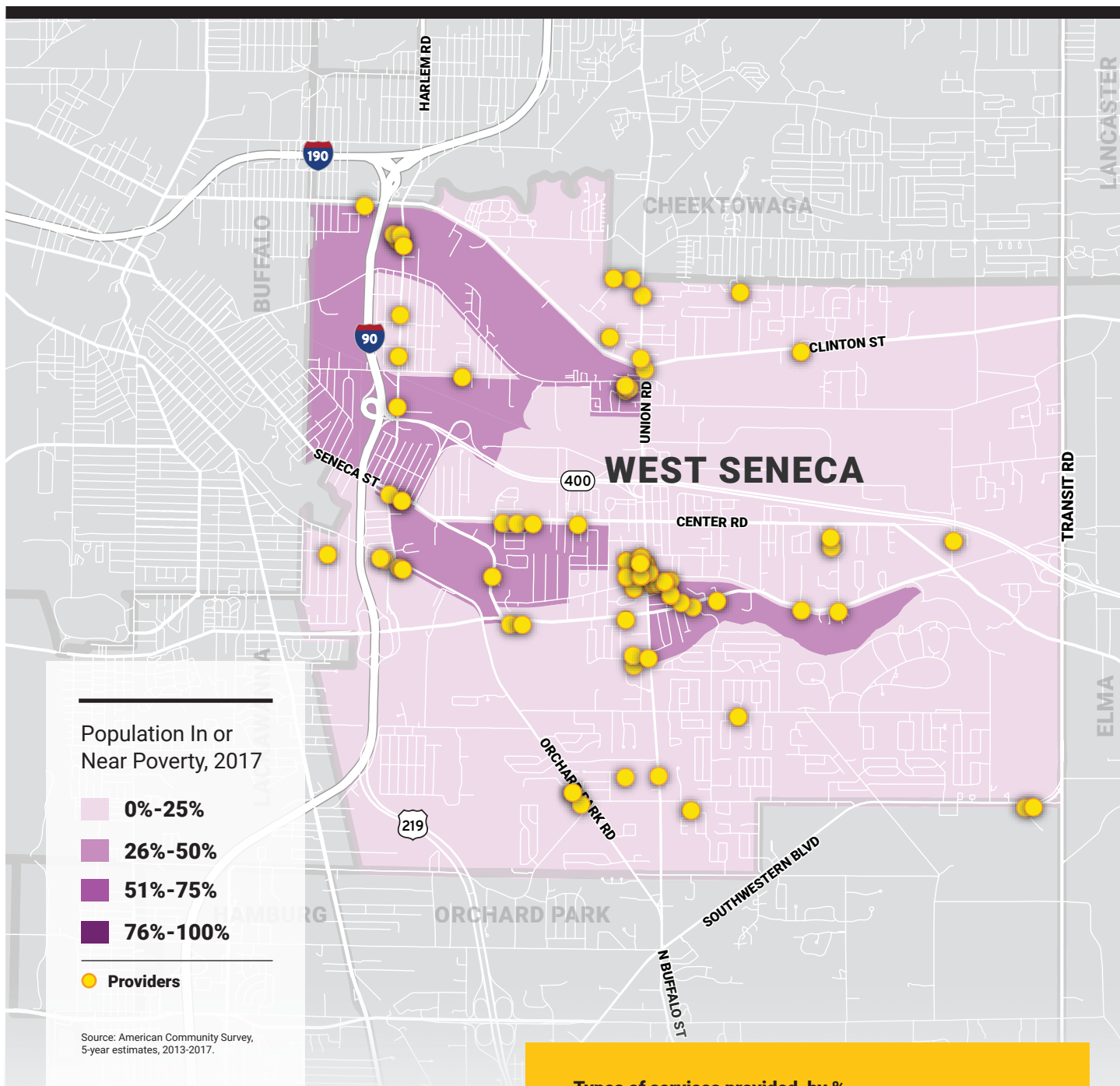
CRIME

Juvenile arrest numbers are low in West Seneca.

Juvenile Arrests, 2013-2017



Source: NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services, Niagara County and Erie County, 2013-2017.



The Landscape of Providers

69 SERVICE PROVIDERS 
in the Town of West Seneca

See more online

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



Types of services provided, by %

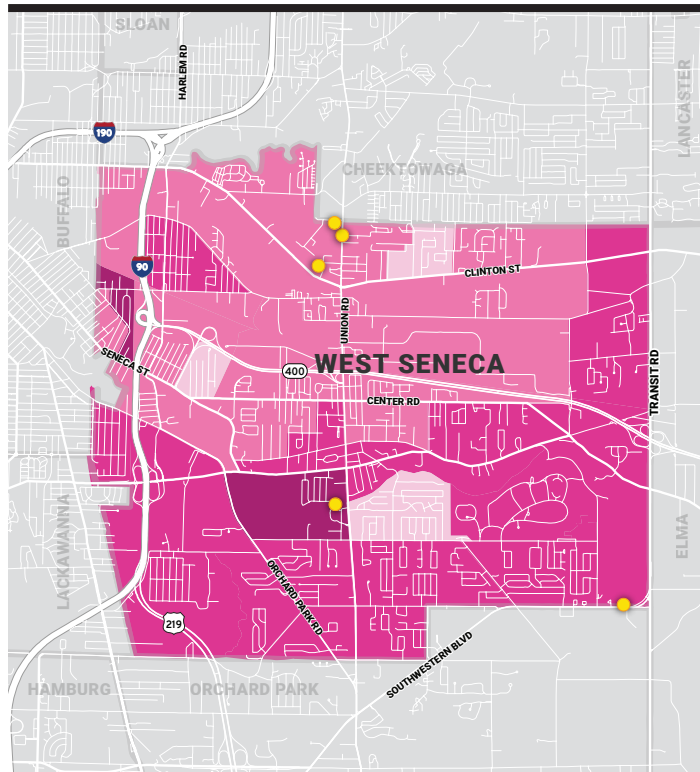
| | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------|
| 51% | Education/ Training | 6% | Housing/Utility |
| 33% | Food | 3% | Homeless |
| 33% | Info/Referral | 3% | Clothing |
| 29% | Mental Health/ Addiction | 3% | Legal |
| 23% | Transportation | 1% | Teen Parents |
| 20% | Health/Wellness | 1% | Veterans |
| 17% | Youth Programs | 1% | Financial Literacy |
| 12% | Seniors | 0% | Crime/Juvenile |

Providers and Resident Needs

% Households Spending 30% or More of Income on Housing Costs, 2017

0-10% 11%-20% 21%-30% 31%-40%

● Providers offering Housing and Financial Services

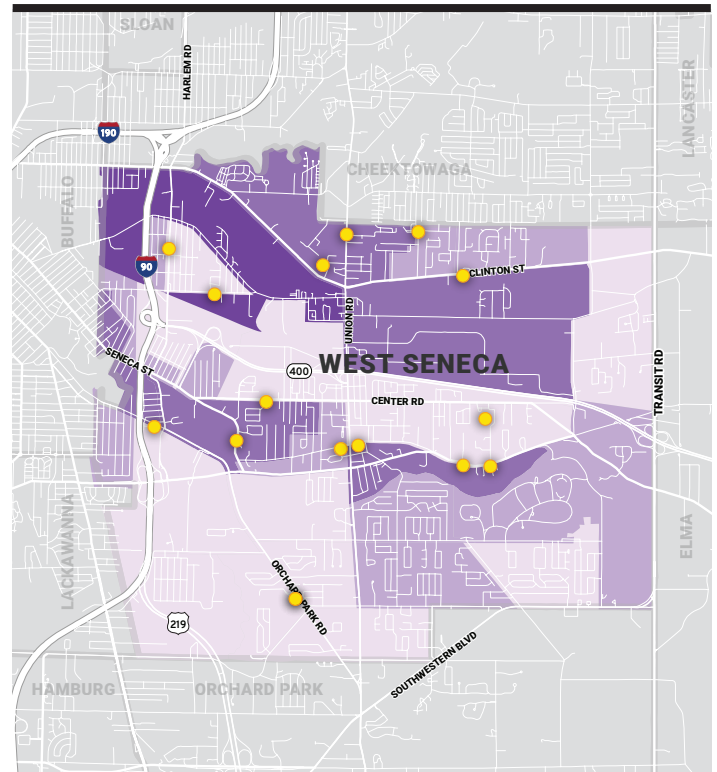


Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2017.

% of Households without a Vehicle, 2017

0% - 5% 6%-10% 11%-20% 21%-30%

● Providers offering Transportation Services



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2017.

Many residents are burdened by housing costs, but few housing and financial services exist.

Five different organizations in West Seneca provide financial or housing services. These include providers of affordable housing for seniors and individuals with disabilities, such as the People Inc. Burchfield Commons Apartments and United Church Manor's Senior Housing. The local Lion's Club branch also aims to offer housing support services for the community, but those services are limited. The Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Buffalo is the community's only provider of financial services. Expanding the number and diversity of housing and financial supports can help the community's nearly 3,500 cost-burdened households cope with the relatively high cost of living in West Seneca.

Transportation options are limited for hundreds of households without a vehicle.

Fifteen providers offer transportation in West Seneca. However, ten of these sites are K-12 schools that transport school children. Other transportation services are aimed at select groups, such as seniors and individuals with disabilities, including a few specialized housing providers, churches, and the Senior Citizen Center. Although more than half of the town's providers are within a quarter-mile of a NFTA bus stop, trips by public transit can often be time-consuming and inconvenient. More low-cost, reliable transportation options that are open to all residents could improve access to services, jobs, and other opportunities for the nearly 1,400 households without a vehicle.

Opportunities and Challenges for Providers

Read more Insights from Providers

A detailed report exploring the perspectives from providers in this community.



What has happened over the past five years?

West Seneca continues to have a relatively large 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 69 providers have the potential to create a particularly strong landscape of services for vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, and lower-income families and individuals who need workforce training and other resources.



A conversation with providers suggested that a variety of efforts could help reverse the double-digit increase in poverty that the town has seen since 2011. Economic development and communication were resounding themes. Specific initiatives providers talked about included improved information about and awareness of existing resources, stronger communication with residents and between providers, expansion of transportation alternatives for younger residents, continued economic development to increase the availability of higher-paying jobs, and investments in additional programs for older children in higher-poverty neighborhoods.

← - Available online at NumbersInNeed.org



Strengths of the System

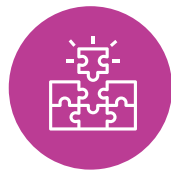
Nearly 70 service providers are located in West Seneca.

At 17 provider locations, residents can receive at least four different kinds of programs and services.

Over half of providers offer some form of education and training, primarily for youth. While providers identified this as a strength of the service landscape, they also identified education and training as an area where expanded and/or stronger programs are needed.

Senior programs are a top strength of the town's social service landscape. Eight locations offer a variety of senior programs and services including meals, health/wellness, and transportation.

Many providers are centrally located, situated within one mile of 1,000+ residents living in or near poverty. Although just 4% of residents use public transit, many providers are also within a quarter mile of a NFTA bus stop.



Gaps

Providers say more is needed to raise awareness of existing services and promote communication between providers and residents. They say there is no go-to spot for residents to get information.

Providers see the need for additional youth programs for older children living west of Union Road. With limited options in these neighborhoods, children are playing in the streets and with playground equipment meant for younger children.

Few training options exist for the 13,000 adults in town with no college experience. Without affordable job training, these residents have limited job prospects and earning potential.

Some services are offered by only a few providers. Affordable housing, mental health, financial literacy, and legal services are programmatic areas where few provider options exist.



Barriers

Providers say that limited transportation options can create barriers to important services such as food and youth programs for nearly 1,400 households in the town without a vehicle.

Transportation alternatives for youth and young adults are needed the most.

The lack of qualified applicants creates barriers to hiring and maintaining programs and services that youth, families, and individuals benefit from.

The high cost of childcare is a barrier to work for parents with limited earning potential. The annual cost of childcare consumes over half of the earnings of a full-time minimum wage worker.

With no centralized source of information, some residents may find the service landscape difficult to navigate and fail to connect with all of the programs and services for which they qualify.



Promising Developments

The West Seneca Chamber of Commerce is strengthening local businesses and growing jobs. The Chamber increased its membership in 2019 as it seeks opportunities to support local employers.

New jobs and training opportunities are coming to West Seneca. Most notably, U.A. Plumbers & Steamfitters Local 22 opened a new headquarters in West Seneca, which equips workers with the skills they need for higher-paying jobs.

The new West Seneca Community Center and Library offers an impressive public gathering space, a hub for a reimagined walkable town center, and an asset for community and economic development.

West Seneca residents are taking collaborative steps to improve the town in ways that support local families in need, create play opportunities for kids, spur local businesses, and promote charitable causes.

Survey Results of Economically Vulnerable Residents

100 residents in need took the survey.

A third of residents surveyed had an urgent concern about something in their lives. A

majority of those with a concern are worried about debt. It is possible that residents take on debt because their income is not enough to pay for necessities like food, utilities, childcare, uninsured medical care, or transportation. About four in five respondents earn a household income of less than \$36,000 per year. Residents with financial challenges mostly deal with consumer/credit card debt and medical bills.

Respondents frequently reported difficulty traveling as a barrier to accessing services. Although there are multiple bus routes in the community, only 4% of respondents use public transit as their primary way of getting around. Some residents see public transit as an impractical method of transportation. Driving a vehicle is the most common form of transportation, but gas, insurance, maintenance, and car payments also make it one of the most expensive.

Read more Insights from Residents

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



34%

REPORTED HAVING SOME TYPE OF URGENT CONCERN

→ **TOP 3 URGENT CONCERNS REPORTED BY THESE RESIDENTS**

Outstanding Debt -----> 53%

No Money for Food -----> 38%

Utility Shut-Off -----> 24%

HEALTH CARE NEEDS

44%

of respondents are in need of some type of healthcare but can't afford it.

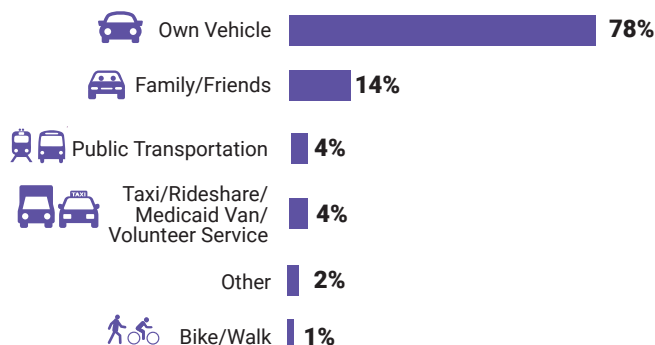
While most respondents have health insurance, many still need medical care they cannot afford, possibly because some care is not covered by insurance or co-pays are unaffordable.



TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

Most respondents use their own vehicle to get around. Survey respondents said that public transit is not a convenient option in the community, which may explain why most of those without their own vehicle prefer to rely on friends or family instead of using public transit.

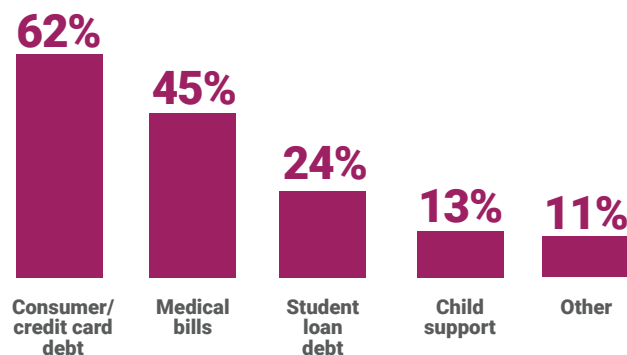
How respondents get around



FINANCIAL NEEDS

Fifty-five percent of respondents are dealing with financial concerns. Consumer debt was the most common financial concern, followed by medical bills.

Top 5 Financial Challenges in Household



Regional Strategies and Models to Consider



Finding solutions to community challenges begins with laying out strategies for addressing their root cause. Strategies outline potential action steps that can be implemented, name some of the actors who could be involved in completing those actions, and are supported by models of their implementation. Models from other places in the region, country, and world demonstrate how other communities carried out a similar strategy, and serve as a starting point for understanding how strategies can be successfully implemented in West Seneca.

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 comprehensive collection of strategies and models that cover a broader range of topics.



Awareness & Information

Raise awareness of existing programs and services for individuals and families.

Insights from residents show that people living in or near poverty often face urgent concerns and need immediate support. But many are unaware of all the available services that can help stabilize their situation, especially individuals with language barriers, mobility issues, or those new to the community—conditions more common for residents in poverty. Service providers also need to know what programs are offered by other nearby organizations to connect clients with services outside their expertise and to fill service gaps. Increasing access to information on social services can help providers improve their programs while making it easier for residents to access key services.

Potential Action Steps

Use the Numbers in Need provider inventory and mapping tool to identify what agencies exist in the community.

Raise awareness of other existing informational tools such as 211 WNY, NY Connects, and Arounja.com.

Use social media to promote informational tools and engage schools, libraries, media, churches, the NFTA, human services providers, coalitions and neighborhood outreach operations to raise awareness.

Maintain and strengthen inventories, directories and other informational tools by keeping them up to date and building them into existing websites and informational packages delivered to new and existing residents.

Engage ethnic media and cultural groups to promote culturally relevant information. Ensure that information for residents is accessible to those with limited literacy and English proficiency.

Potential Actors in the Community

All service providers
Information, help, and crisis hotlines
Libraries
Media
Public school districts
Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA)
Churches and communities of faith
Police departments

Models to Consider

Lockport Resource Guide
Lockport, NY
grigglewis.server284.com



Regional Strategies and Models to Consider, cont'd.



Youth & Teens

Strengthen and expand afterschool programs, especially mentoring, for at risk children.

More than one out of every five children in Buffalo Niagara—over 50,000—live in poverty. These children are more likely to live with single parents who often work multiple jobs to support their family, limiting their time at home. Children in poverty are concentrated in urban areas with legacies of disinvestment and limited economic opportunities. Based on insights from residents, children in these neighborhoods sometimes see illegal activity as the best way to make money. Without intervention, children raised in poverty are more likely to struggle in school, drop out, and continue the cycle of poverty. Afterschool and summer programs can give youth constructive ways to spend their time while gaining positive influences and skills that can lead to a bright future.

Potential Action Steps

Raise awareness of existing programs by including providers and programs in any directory of human services. Develop informational material about these programs for dissemination to parents.

Build a school-based peer mentoring program to support at-risk youth.

Expand afterschool programs that develop job skills and expand career pathways for youth such as career mentoring, internships, and the YES (Youth Engaged in Service) program.

Explore partnerships that would offer reliable bus transportation from afterschool programs to a child's home.

Connect youth and older residents through intergenerational afterschool programs involving mentoring, tutoring, and youth entrepreneurship.

Potential Actors in the Community

Public school districts

Youth services organizations

Religious organizations

Models to Consider

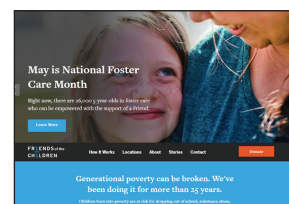
Friends of the Children

Portland, OR and various locations across the U.S.

friendsofthechildren.org

Lt. Col. Matt Urban Human Services Center
Buffalo, NY

urbanctr.org



Data Sources & Notes

Cover

US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007-2011 5-Year Estimates; US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates.

US Census Bureau, US Decennial Census, 2000.

Defining Need, Page 2

Federal Poverty Level: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, HHS Poverty Guidelines for 2020 (published in the Federal Register on 1/17/20).

Minimum Wage: New York State Department of Labor, Minimum Wage (effective 12/31/19).

Poverty Map, Page 4

US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates.

Poverty, Need and Economic Vulnerability, Page 5

Population in or Near Poverty: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007-11 5-Year Estimates; US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-17 5-Year Estimates.

Vulnerable Populations: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates.

Factors that Matter, Page 6

Work and Income: InfoGroup, ReferenceUSA Business Database, 2019; Buffalo Business First, Book of Lists, 2018. 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, 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates. 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, 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates. Low-income households in this instance are defined as households with annual incomes below \$35,000.

Transportation: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates.

Crime: NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services, Niagara County and Erie County, 2013-2017.

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 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

Poverty Map: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates.

Provider Data: Information submitted by agency providers through a provider questionnaire updated a listing of providers developed for the 2014 community report for West Seneca. 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 2014.

Provider Services and Needs of Residents, Page 8

Poverty Map: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates.

Provider Data: See note for page 7.

Opportunities and Challenges for Providers, Page 9

Insights from Providers, Town of West Seneca, April 2020. Provider insights come from an agency focus group held in November 2019 with seven provider representatives.

Survey Results of Economically Vulnerable Residents, Page 10

Insights from Residents, Town of West Seneca, April 2020. Survey findings come from 100 surveys completed at five locations and online between September and November 2019.

Strategies and Models to Consider

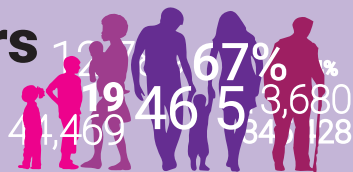
Children living in poverty: American Community Survey, 2017 5-Year Estimates.

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT Town of West Seneca

APRIL 2020

Numbers in Need

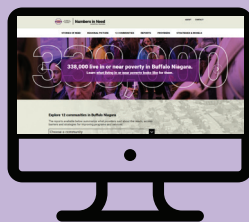
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A Mobile Safety Net Team
initiative established by
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