

COMMUNITY

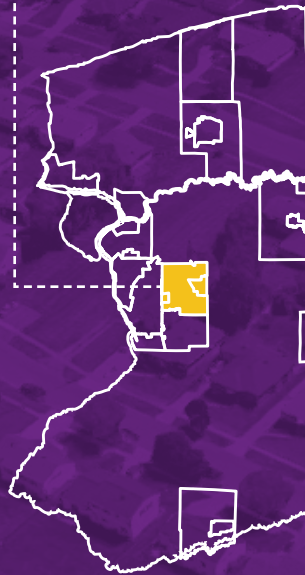
SNAPSHOT

24,000+
live in or near
poverty

TOWN OF Cheektowaga

MAY 2020

Since 2011,
**poverty has
increased by
16%**, while total
**population has
decreased by 1%.**



Numbers in Need

IN BUFFALO NIAGARA



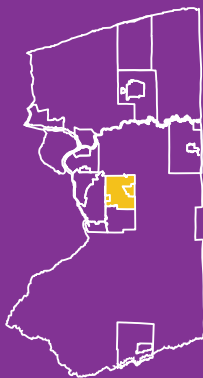
A Mobile Safety Net Team
initiative established by
The John R. Oishei Foundation



Prepared by  University at Buffalo
Regional Institute
School of Architecture and Planning

Town of Cheektowaga

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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 Cheektowaga, 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 2013.

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



Prepared by



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Regional Institute
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Defining Need

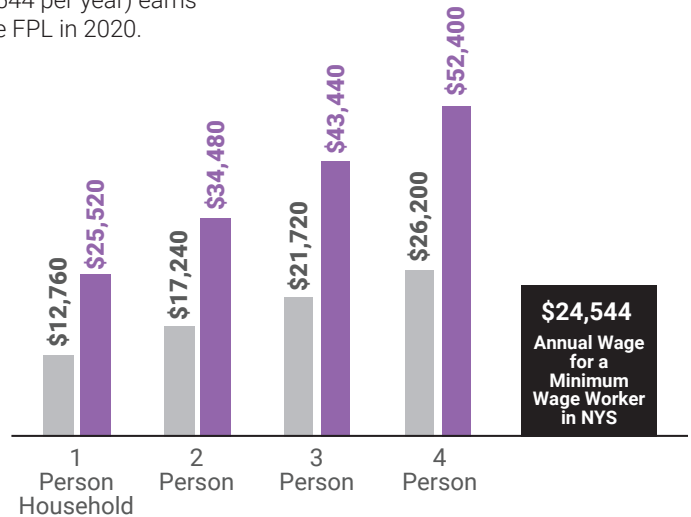
Over 24,000 residents in Cheektowaga live in or near poverty with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty line.

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

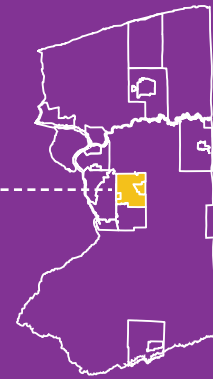
■ Federal Poverty Level
■ 200% of Federal Poverty Level



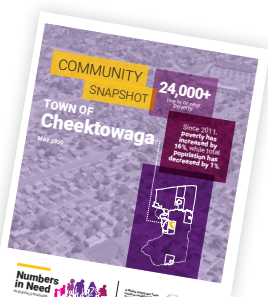
Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Reports for this Community

This report is part of a comprehensive suite of reports for the **Town of Cheektowaga**, 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.



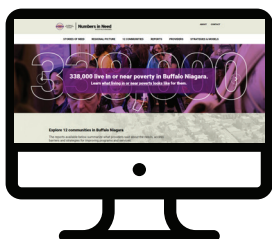
Insights from Residents

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.

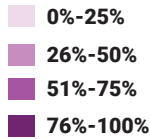


Visit us online at NumbersInNeed.org

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 Cheektowaga

Population in or Near Poverty, 2017



Among the total population of **87,484**

11% ARE IN POVERTY

9,200

live on incomes below the federal poverty level.



17% ARE NEAR POVERTY

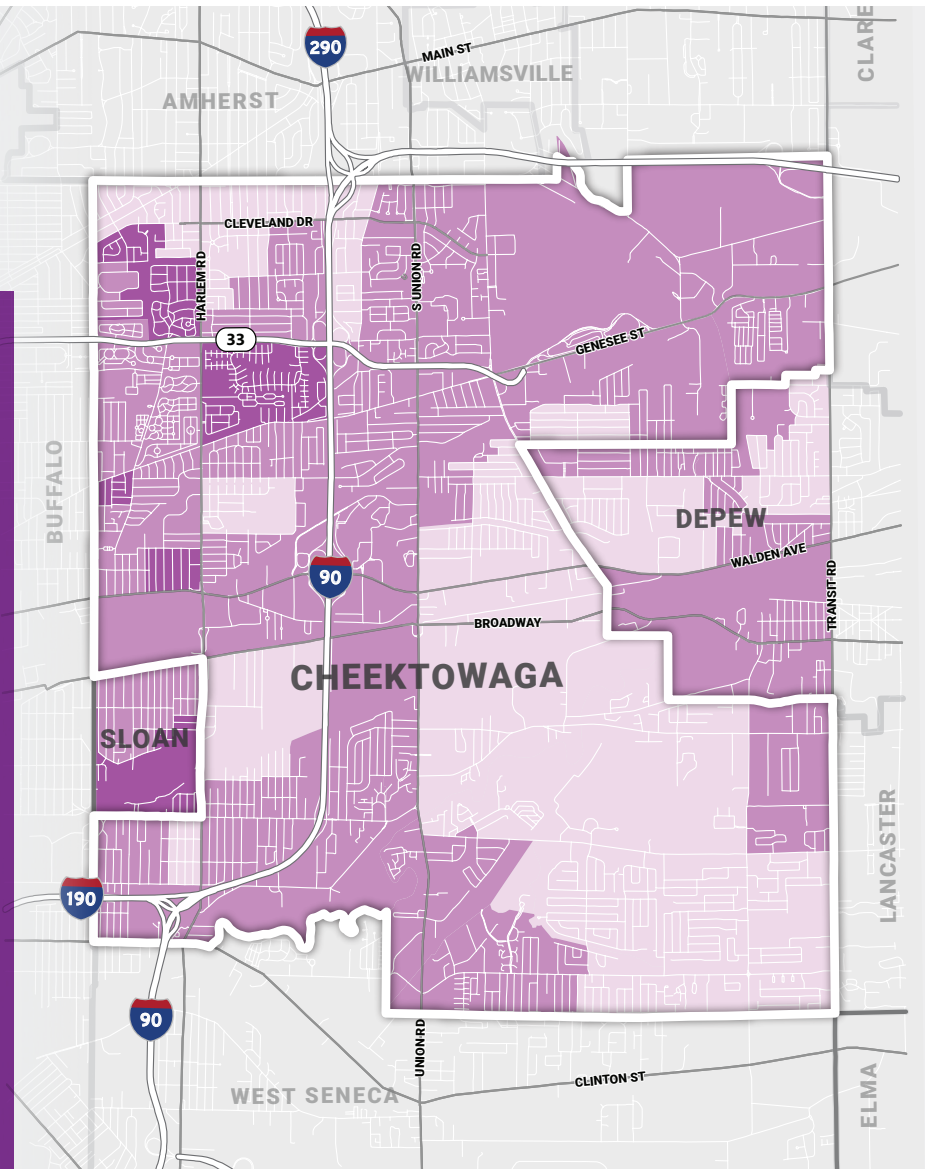
15,002

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

28% ARE IN OR NEAR POVERTY

24,202

residents are doing poorly or struggling financially.



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2013-2017.

More than one in four Cheektowaga residents live in or near poverty.

With 9,200 residents in poverty, Cheektowaga's poverty rate (11%) is below the regional average (15%). But many residents also struggle financially—over 15,000 live near poverty, or on incomes between 100% and 200% of the poverty line. The poverty rate increased in areas of Cheektowaga in recent years. From 2011 to 2017, the number of Cheektowaga residents living *in* poverty increased by 16% (7,943 to 9,200). However, the number of residents living *near* poverty declined by 13% over that time (17,184 to 15,002).

Poverty is more common in the western part of Cheektowaga near Buffalo. But pockets of poverty also exist in the northeastern part of town around the Buffalo Niagara International Airport, and in the Village of Depew. Cheektowaga's overall poverty rate increased slightly from 2011 to 2017 (from 9% to 11%), but in some neighborhoods, poverty increased substantially. This includes neighborhoods in the northern part of town, along Harlem Road, in the Village of Depew, and near the West Seneca border, where the poverty rate doubled from 2011 to 2017. In many neighborhoods, over half of residents now live in or near poverty.

Poverty, Need and Economic Vulnerability

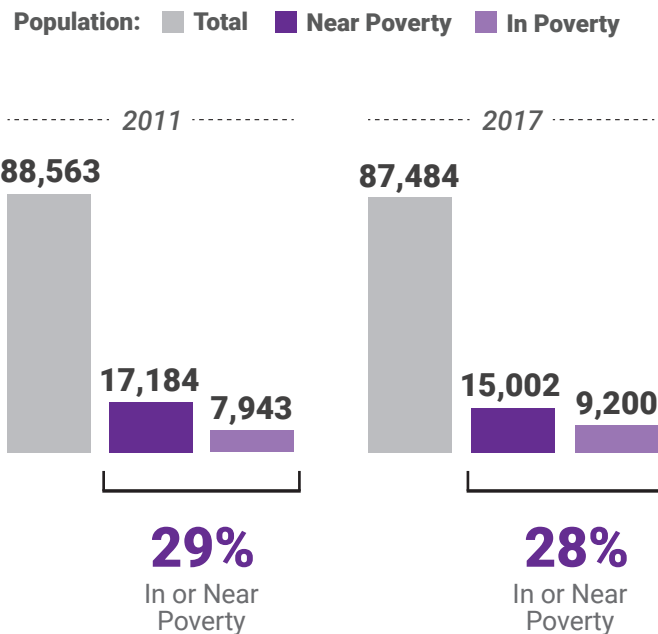
Slightly fewer residents live *in or near* poverty in Cheektowaga in 2017 than in 2011. The percentage of people living *in* poverty increased as a percentage of the total population between 2011 and 2017, while the percentage of people living *near* poverty dropped as a percentage of the total population.

Of the community's most vulnerable populations, married couples with children are by far the least likely to live in poverty. Meanwhile, more than a quarter of single-parent households (nearly 1,100 altogether) 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. Poverty rates may be lower but still represent large numbers of individuals in poverty. The 9% of seniors living in poverty represents 763 seniors, slightly more than the 639 residents who make up the 15% of refugees and immigrants living in poverty. Children under the age of 18 have the highest number living in poverty among vulnerable populations in Cheektowaga, with 2,750 children under the age of 18 living in poverty. Young adults between the ages of 25 and 34 have the second highest number, with 1,296 young adults living in poverty in the community.

The total population, as well as those near poverty, saw modest declines in recent years. However, the population in poverty grew by 16%.

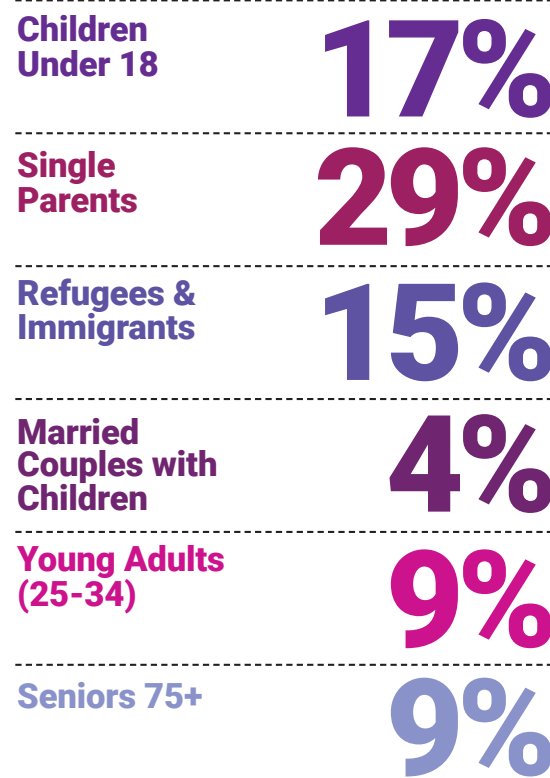
Total Population and Population In or Near Poverty, 2011 and 2017



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

In Cheektowaga, single parent families are seven times more likely to be in poverty than two-parent families, contributing to the relatively larger poverty rate for children under 18.

Vulnerable Populations In Poverty, 2017



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

Factors That Matter

Job opportunities in Cheektowaga cover a variety of industries, including retail, healthcare, and manufacturing. Although the top ten employers in the town make up about 11% of all jobs, workers at top retail employers likely earn less than those in manufacturing or healthcare.

About two thirds of the jobs in Cheektowaga pay less than \$40,000 per year, and a third pay less than \$15,000 per year. One way residents can increase their incomes is through training and education. Only 22% of residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, but the median income for those with a bachelor's degree is about 48% higher than the median income for those with a high school diploma.

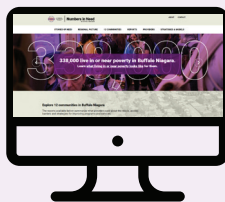
A majority of residents drive a car to get around. Adults 65 years old and older are almost half as likely to own a car. Residents who do not drive are far more likely to rely on carpooling than other means of transportation.

Violent crime rates have fluctuated, but show a slight increase since 2011, while property crimes have shown a slight decrease. Juvenile arrests have consistently dropped since 2011.

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

Cheektowaga's top 10 largest employers are in retail, healthcare, and manufacturing. Together, they account for about 11% of all jobs in the town.

Top 10 Employers, 2019

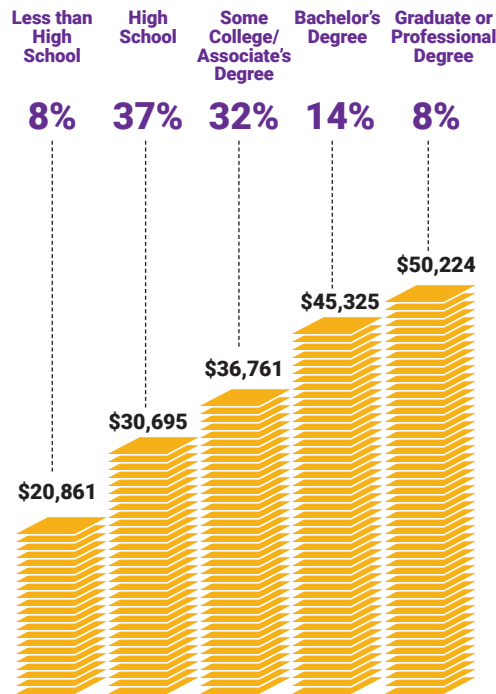
- #1 Wegmans
- #6 The Center of Hospice Palliative Care
- #2 Tops Friendly Market
- #7 Sodexo
- #3 Osmose Utilities Svc
- #8 Buffalo Niagara International Airport
- #4 PCB Piezotronics Inc
- #9 Derrick Corp
- #5 Walmart Supercenter
- #10 Cameron Compression Systems

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

EDUCATION

45% of all Cheektowaga adults have no more than a high school diploma. Those with some college education earn at least 20% more.

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

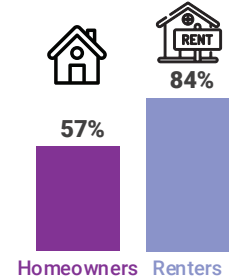


Source: American Community Survey, 2017 5-Year Estimates.

HOUSING

The majority of lower-income households are burdened by housing costs, but renters are most greatly affected.

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



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

TRANSPORTATION

Seniors are more likely to be without a car than younger residents.

% of Residents Without a Vehicle

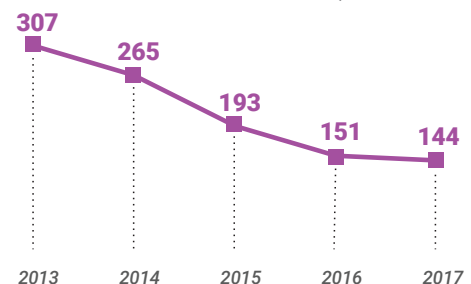


Source: American Community Survey, 2017 5-Year Estimates.

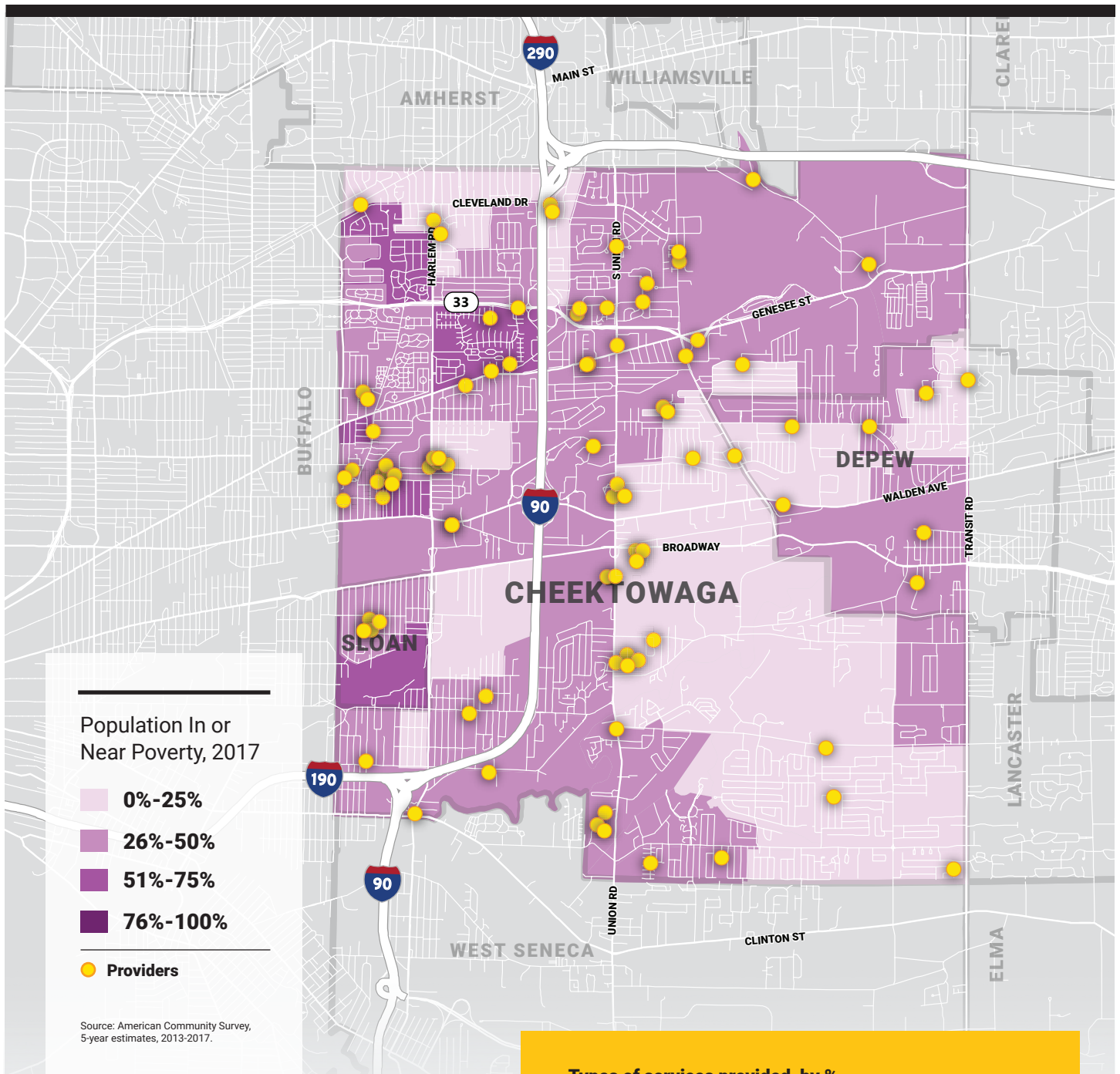
CRIME

Juvenile arrests have consistently decreased in the last several years. There were half as many juvenile arrests in 2017 than 2013.

Juvenile Arrests, 2013-2017



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



The Landscape of Providers

89 SERVICE PROVIDERS
in the Town of Cheektowaga

See more online

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



Types of services provided, by %

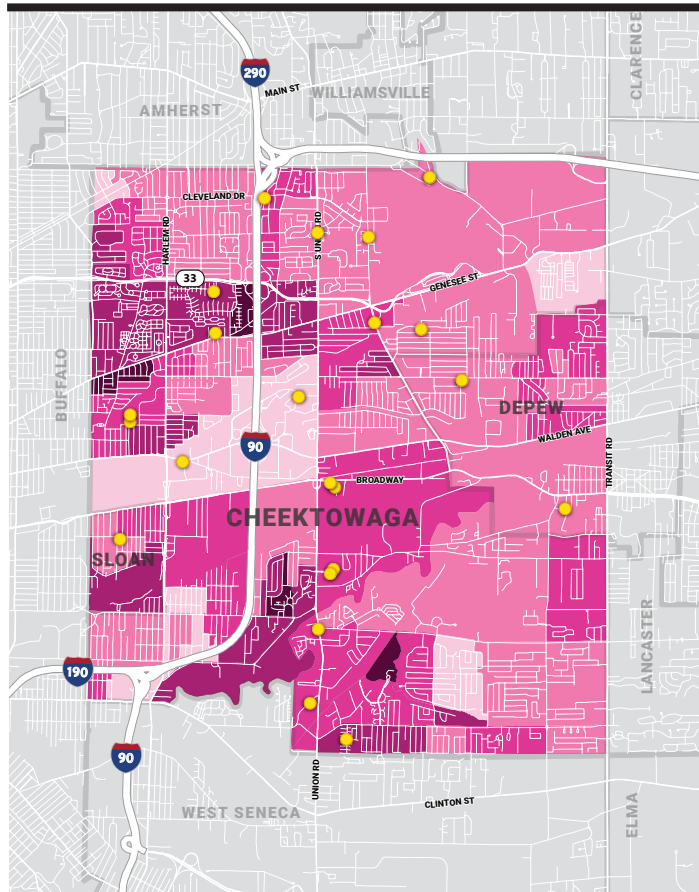
52%	Education/ Training	11%	Crime/Juvenile
43%	Info/Referral	8%	Clothing
33%	Youth Programs	8%	Transportation
28%	Health/Wellness	7%	Seniors
20%	Food	3%	Teen Parents
19%	Mental Health/ Addictions	2%	Veterans
15%	Housing/Utility	2%	Homeless
12%	Financial Literacy	2%	Legal

Providers and Resident Needs

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

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

● Providers offering Housing and Financial Services

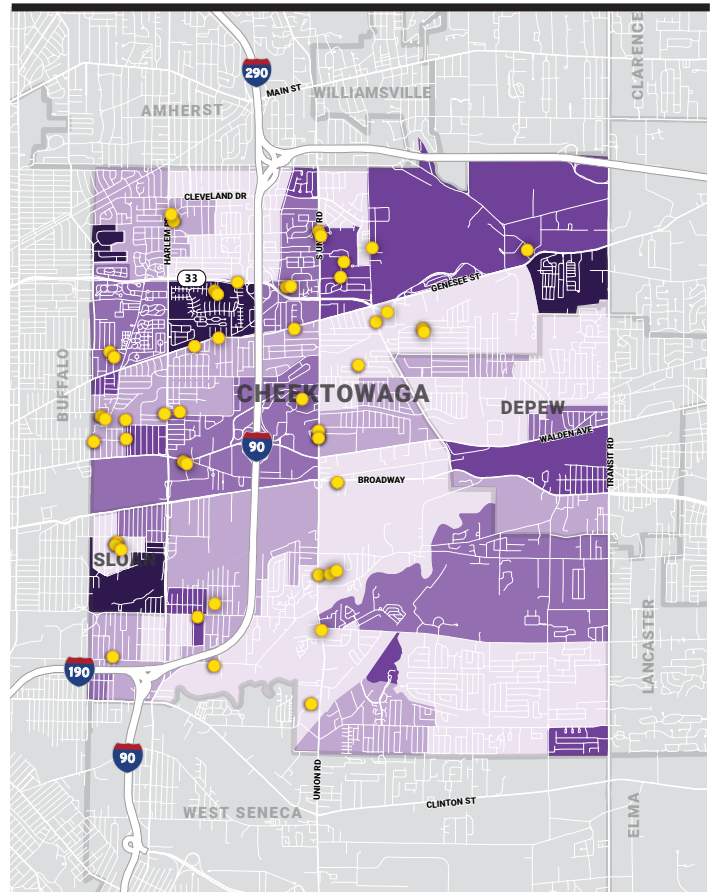


Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2013-2017.

% of Families with Children that are in Poverty, 2017

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

● Providers offering Mental Health Services



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2013-2017.

Households burdened by housing costs may be underserved by housing and financial services.

Cheektowaga has 21 providers of financial or housing services. This includes housing for individuals with disabilities or mental health issues, such as Horizon Health Services. Cheektowaga's Senior Citizen Center and others offer housing support for select groups. Training and childcare providers, like Erie 1 BOCES or Head Start, offer financial services, but general financial support is limited to government offices, like the Town of Cheektowaga's Community & Economic Development office. These providers are not always located where cost-burdened households are most concentrated. Expanding the variety and capacity of financial services can help the town's nearly 8,800 cost-burdened households overcome financial burdens.

There is a need for wider range of mental health services in Cheektowaga.

Being raised in poverty increases the odds that children will face mental health issues at some point in life. The poverty rate for families with children is generally higher on the north and west sides of Cheektowaga where many of the town's 17 mental health service providers are found. These include a number of assisted living and transitional housing facilities, like Oxford House Beechwood Homes. A few others, like Cheektowaga's Child & Family Services and Catholic Charities, also offer mental health services. These locations are a valuable resource, but a provider focus group indicated mental health is one of the community's greatest service gaps, so a wider range of mental health supports is needed.

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?

Cheektowaga has a large number of providers to help more residents climb out of poverty and achieve economic self sufficiency. And with the launch of the Cheektowaga Community Hub in 2016, these providers are collaborating even more. The programs and services offered by the community's 89 providers create a particularly strong safety net of services for vulnerable populations such as seniors, youth, and lower-income families and individuals.



A conversation with providers suggests a range of efforts may help continue the decline in the number of residents living in or near poverty. These include improved expanding options for transportation, affordable housing, mental health services, employment, workforce training, and funding for services and programs.

Providers spoke positively about the steps many of the community's providers are making to fill these needs, and credit the Cheektowaga Community Hub for increasing opportunities for collaborating, expanding outreach, and enhancing services.

← Available online at NumbersInNeed.org



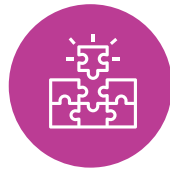
Strengths of the System

Nearly 90 service providers are located in Cheektowaga. At 25 locations, residents can receive at least four different types of services.

Every type of service is offered by at least two providers in town. Unlike many communities, every type of service can be found at two or more sites in Cheektowaga. The most common services are education, information, and youth programs.

Most providers are located near thousands of residents in need. About half of providers are situated within one mile of 3,000+ residents living in or near poverty.

Programs for seniors and food are a top community strength. Despite having a relatively low number of these programs, the provider focus group identified senior services and food programs as the strongest social services in the community.



Gaps

Transportation gaps can limit economic opportunities. A lack of transportation options limits job opportunities and creates hiring constraints for local businesses.

There's a need for more quality jobs, connected to training and education. While jobs are available, they are often lower paying, or mismatched with worker skills and training programs.

Mental health services need to be expanded and integrated into other programs. The provider focus group identified mental health as the community's top service need behind transportation.

Housing supports need to be expanded, especially for seniors and young adults. Many homeowners and renters are burdened by housing costs.

Recognizing recent progress, providers want to see continued partnerships on services.



Barriers

Financial concerns create barriers to education and training. Providers wanted to promote quality jobs that do not require college.

Getting to basic services without a car is a challenge. Transportation gaps can create barriers to childcare, healthcare, and education.

There is a constant need for more funding to improve services, across all types of service providers.

Families face a range of barriers to youth programs. Financial, cultural, and transportation barriers can limit youth participation.

Seniors need supports to help them age-in-place. The costs of homeownership and a shortage of affordable housing, limit housing options.

Residents face a wide range of obstacles to employment—from childcare and transportation, to age bias and drug use.



Promising Developments

The Cheektowaga Community Hub is increasing collaboration and enhancing services. Providers said the Hub helps them reach more residents in need and spurs collaboration between providers.

A variety of providers are addressing mental health. The Cheektowaga Police Department and local schools are leading efforts to find solutions to the community's mental health challenges.

Cheektowaga is investing in its youth. New youth programs and expanded facilities benefit children and families.

New facilities for housing, childcare, healthcare, and social services are being built to fill service gaps.

A coalition of employers is working with transportation providers to fill gaps in public transit service along a stretch of Union Road that is creating hiring challenges.

Survey Results of Economically Vulnerable Residents

194 residents in need took the survey.

Over 40% of residents surveyed had an urgent concern about something in their lives. Most of those with a concern are worried about debt. It is possible that residents take on debt because they do not have enough money to pay for necessities like food, utilities, childcare, uninsured medical care, or transportation. Eighty-eight percent of respondent households earn less than \$36,000 per year. Residents with financial challenges mostly deal with consumer/credit card debt, medical bills, and student loans. Only about a third of respondent households earn income from employment, meaning a majority rely on fixed incomes.

Difficulty traveling is a barrier to services for many residents. Although there are multiple bus routes in the community, only 6% of respondents use public transit as their primary way of getting around. Driving a vehicle is the most common form of transportation, but gas, insurance, repairs, maintenance, and car payments 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.



42%

REPORTED HAVING SOME TYPE OF URGENT CONCERN

TOP 3 URGENT CONCERNS REPORTED BY THESE RESIDENTS

Outstanding Debt -----> **59%**

Utility Shut-Off -----> **33%**

No Money for Food -----> **31%**

HEALTH CARE NEEDS

40% of respondents are in need of some type of healthcare but can't afford it.

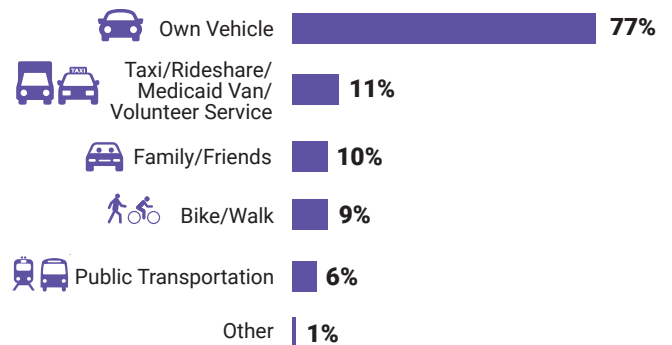
The vast majority of respondents are insured, but almost half still need medical care they cannot afford, possibly because some care is not covered by insurance or co-pays are too high.



TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

Most respondents use their own vehicle to get around. Those who do not drive are twice as likely to use taxis, rideshare, Medicaid vans or other volunteer services than to take public transportation. Biking/walking is about as common as relying on family and friends, all of which are favored over public transportation.

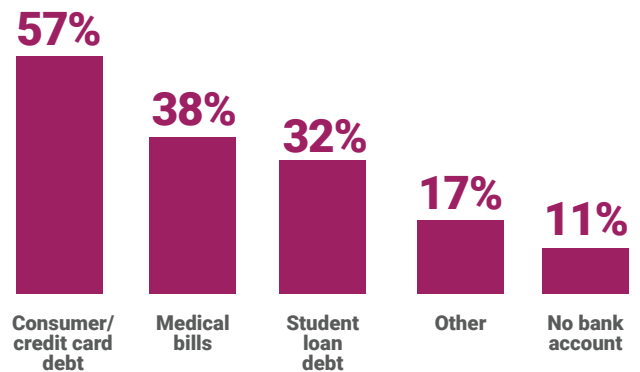
How respondents get around



FINANCIAL NEEDS

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

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 Cheektowaga.

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.



Transportation

Enhance and promote public transit to increase access to jobs and services.

For Buffalo Niagara residents without a car, access to services and opportunities can be limited. The region has over 60,000 households without a vehicle, many of whom live in poverty, but many service providers and amenities are not within walking distance of a transit stop. Service providers can consider transit accessibility in how they provide services, by locating facilities near transit stops or offering transportation for customers without a vehicle. Service providers can look to offer transportation themselves or form partnerships with transit agencies and ridesharing companies to fill in transportation gaps in areas underserved by transit.

Potential Action Steps

Partner with ridesharing companies like Uber and Lyft to provide first- and last-mile connections for residents and services beyond walking distance of a transit stop.

Develop transit hubs that connect multiple modes of transportation to enable multi-modal trips.

Provide funding for transit trips to essential services, like employment, health care, and education.

Partner with transportation providers and other social service organizations to fill in transportation gaps.

Promote the use of volunteers, and innovative funding among service organizations to provide transportation for customers, clients, and workers.

Potential Actors in the Community

Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority

Private ride-sharing companies

Transportation service providers (private, not-for-profit)

Local governments

Economic and community development organizations

Models to Consider

CDTA Flex On Demand
Albany, NY
cdta.org/flex

Bus Rapid Transit
Global Model
itdp.org



Regional Strategies and Models to Consider, cont'd.



Housing

Bolster supports for homeowners living on a fixed income, especially older adults.

Nearly a third (32%) of homes in Buffalo Niagara were built before 1940. In urban areas where economic need is more concentrated, this share is much higher. People in or near poverty are more likely to live in older homes, since they tend to cost less to rent or own. But older homes are often more expensive to maintain, which can be a challenge for those on a fixed income, like older adults. Based on insights from residents, many do not have enough in savings to cover costly repairs when issues arise. This can lead to difficult decisions, like having to choose between repairing a furnace or keeping up with health care costs. Helping low income residents cover the costs of home repairs can lead to financial security and enable older adults to age in place.

Potential Action Steps

Raise awareness of new and existing resources such as Eight Days of Hope and Erie County Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program, which offer zero-interest loans for major repairs that can be deferred until the home is sold or transferred.

Explore the creation of an emergency housing fund.

Consider a community solar project as a way to lower utility costs for low-income homeowners that typically face barriers to clean energy investments and utilization.

Create or strengthen block clubs, which have helped homeowners with necessary repairs in some neighborhoods, and may be able to negotiate lower prices with handymen and contractors.

Potential Actors in the Community

Housing service providers

Financial education service providers

Block clubs and community organizations

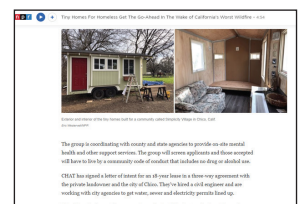
Senior service providers

Utility assistance providers

Models to Consider

Rebuilding Together
Various locations across the U.S.
rebuildingtogether.org

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

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 incomes below \$35,000/year.

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 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

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 2013 community report for Cheektowaga. 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.

Providers and Resident Needs, Page 8

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

Provider Data: See note for page 7.

Being raised in poverty increases the odds of mental health issues: K.A. McLaughlin, J. Breslau, J.G. Green, M.D. Lakoma, N.A. Sampson, and A.M. Zaslavsky, "Childhood socio-economic status and the onset, persistence, and severity of DSM-IV mental disorders in a US national sample," *Social Science & Medicine*, 73 (7), 2011.

Opportunities and Challenges for Providers, Page 9

Insights from Providers, Cheektowaga, May 2020. Provider insights come from an agency focus group held in December 2019 with 21 provider representatives.

About half of providers are situated within one mile of 3,000+ residents living in or near poverty: UBRI analysis of provider locations relative to NFTA bus stops, 2019.

Survey Results of Economically Vulnerable Residents, Page 10

Insights from Residents, Town of Cheektowaga, May 2020. Survey findings come from 194 surveys completed at 21 locations and online between October and December 2019.

Strategies and Models to Consider

Households without vehicles: American Community Survey, 2017 5-Year Estimates.

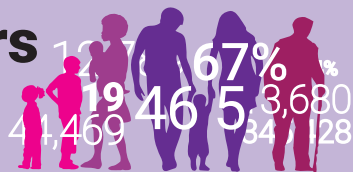
Homes built before 1940: American Community Survey, 2017 1-Year Estimates.

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT Town of Cheektowaga

MAY 2020

Numbers in Need

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