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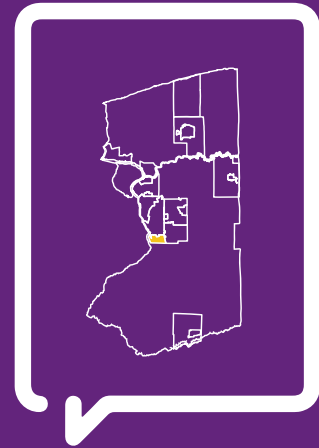
INSIGHTS

FROM

PROVIDERS

# CITY OF Lackawanna

JUNE 2020



## Numbers in Need

IN BUFFALO NIAGARA

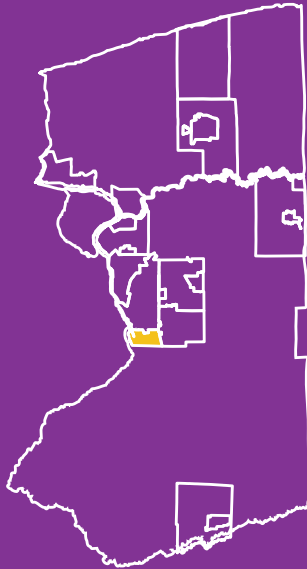


A Mobile Safety Net Team initiative established by The John R. Oishei Foundation



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

# City of Lackawanna



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## About this Report

This report offers a snapshot of findings for the City of Lackawanna, with new data on the community's population that lives in or near poverty. It includes the perspectives of human service 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

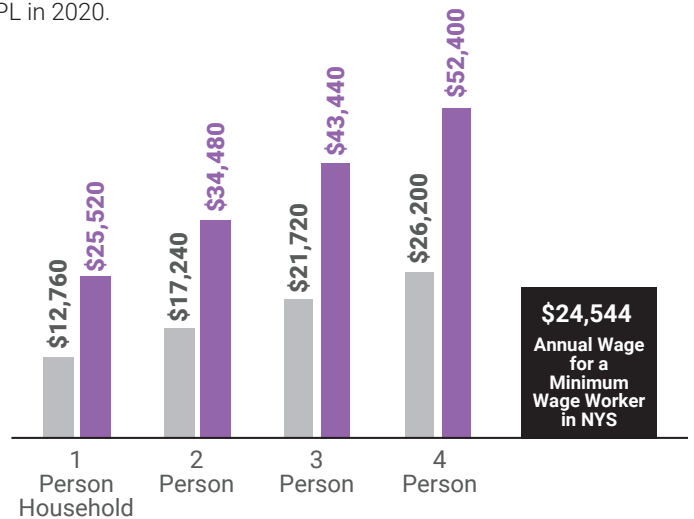
More than 9,300 residents in Lackawanna live in or near poverty on incomes below two hundred percent of the federal poverty line.

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 a 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 two hundred percent 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

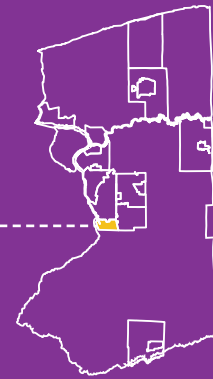
■ Federal Poverty Level    ■ 200% of Federal Poverty Level



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 **City of Lackawanna**, one of 12 representative communities in the Buffalo Niagara Region selected for assessment and investment as part of the Numbers in Need project.

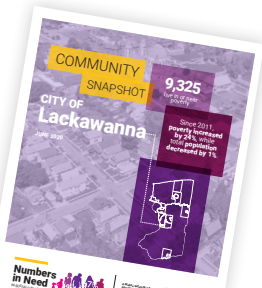


Each of these reports for this community is available online at [NumbersinNeed.org](https://NumbersinNeed.org)



## Insights from Providers

This report, *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.



## Community Snapshot

*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.



## Visit us online at [NumbersinNeed.org](https://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.

# What Went Into This Report



## Building an Updated Landscape of Providers



The 2014 Baseline Community Report was the starting point.

### Baseline Community Reports

The report completed for the City of Lackawanna in April 2014 offered a starting point for analyzing the landscape of services.



## Information was updated through an Agency Questionnaire.

### Agency Questionnaire

Dozens of not-for-profit and governmental human service providers completed an agency questionnaire, which asked providers for updated information on their organizations, including the programs and services they offer.



## Gaining Insights from Providers

We shared what we heard from residents and what the data said about the community.

Talking with agencies that provide programs and services to residents in the community highlighted challenges and barriers that preliminary data findings did not show. In some cases, providers turned our attention to new topics and areas of concern. In other cases, they offered additional insights on data and trends revealed through outreach to residents and analysis of detailed community data on poverty, housing costs, vehicle access, educational attainment, work, income, and family factors that contribute to economic vulnerability.

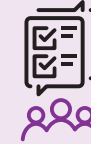
### Participating Organizations

- ACCESS of WNY
- Algonquin Sports for Kids
- Catholic Charities of WNY
- Creating Healthy Schools and Communities/ Cornell Cooperative Extension Niagara County
- Erie County Department of Social Services
- Lackawanna City School District
- Partnership for the Public Good
- SUNY Erie Community College

### Community Data



### Resident Surveys



### Resident Focus Groups



Preliminary findings from these activities were shared at a provider focus group and through provider interviews.

### Provider Focus Group



11 representatives of not-for-profit organizations and governmental service providers participated in a focus group sharing insights on additional areas of concern, barriers, successes, and strategies for the future.

## Perspectives and Insights from Providers

The findings presented in this report synthesize **what we heard from providers**. Insights were captured from several providers who participated in a focus group and shared additional perspectives and information on needs of the community, barriers they face in connecting with residents, and promising developments.



**Strengths of the Landscape**



**Additional Gaps/Needs Identified by Providers**



**Barriers Residents Face to Programs, Services, and Jobs**



**Promising Developments**



**Models to Consider**

### Find it here:

**Pg 5 of this report**  
*(The Landscape of Providers)*

**Numbers in Need Website**  
*(Provider Tool)*





## Strengths of the Landscape

### Nearly 50 service providers are located in Lackawanna.

Lackawanna has more service providers per capita than any other community in the study region except for Akron-Newstead. As one provider focus group participant put it, “We are a service rich community.” The typical provider is a small, non-profit agency with less than 30 employees. Most agencies here offer at least three different types of programs and services. Almost every type of service is made available by at least one provider. In addition to the 46 providers located in Lackawanna, the community benefits from providers located outside of the community that are actively engaged in meeting the needs of residents for education, youth programs, food, and more.

### Thousands of residents are within a mile of the typical provider.

Across Lackawanna, over 9,300 individuals live in or near poverty. Economic need is most pronounced in areas along Route 5. It is also notable in areas west of South Park Avenue and along Abbott Road. Many service providers are located in these higher-need areas, and 90% are within a quarter-mile of an NFTA bus stop. The typical service provider has within a one-mile radius of its location nearly 5,500 people living in or near poverty. Having providers located in close proximity to many residents in need is important because residents are more likely to know about and use services that are near where they live.

### Programs for senior citizens are a top community strength.

About 120 seniors in Lackawanna live in poverty. Even more live on a fixed income above the poverty level but struggle with expensive home repairs, large healthcare bills and/or providing for their basic daily needs. Lackawanna has 10 providers that offer a variety of programs and services for those ages 65 and up. These agencies include the Lackawanna Senior Center, the Lackawanna Municipal Housing Authority, ACCESS of WNY, and Catholic Health LIFE Program. Providers participating in a focus group identified the community’s programs and services for seniors as a top strength of the service landscape.

### Information and referral is a strength of the landscape.

About half of people in Lackawanna who live in or near poverty have lived in their home for less than 5 years, according to the survey of residents. Some of these residents are new to the community; others are new to the neighborhood they live in. Many may not be familiar with the programs and services available from providers in the community to help families meet basic household needs and climb out of poverty. The many service providers that offer information and referral create a strong foundation for both new and longstanding residents who may have not needed help in the past but now do.

**The most common services—information/referral, education and youth programs—are available at 22 or more locations.**

Source: UBRI analysis of provider locations, 2020.

**About half of Lackawanna’s service providers are within a one-mile radius of 5,400+ residents in or near poverty.**

Source: UBRI analysis of provider locations relative to the population living in or near poverty, 2020.

**About 90% of Lackawanna’s service providers are located within a quarter-mile of an NFTA bus stop.**

Source: UBRI analysis of provider locations and NFTA transit stops, 2020.

### Top strengths identified by provider focus group

Providers were asked to identify the community’s strongest programs and services. Programs for seniors and information/referral were considered top strengths.







## Additional Gaps/Needs Identified by Providers

### Access to healthy foods is limited for many residents.

One of the greatest service gaps in Lackawanna is access to healthy food. As one participant bluntly summarized the community's food access, "There's no food, let alone healthy food." Neighborhoods west of Route 62 in Lackawanna are designated by the USDA as a food desert where many lower-income residents have low access to a supermarket. There are no full-service grocery stores in Lackawanna, and the community's nearest supermarket is in West Seneca. While this is a relatively short drive, residents in Lackawanna are less likely to have a vehicle than the region overall. There are a few corner stores within walking distance for some households, but they tend to lack healthy food options. Participants reflected on how many of the community's refugees and immigrants are accustomed to buying fresh goods from markets daily, but the corner stores they have within walking distance typically do not offer fresh produce.

Money for food was a common concern among residents surveyed in Lackawanna. The community's food programs, which make up a third of all services in the city, can be a lifeline for those in need. Participants discussed how the Lackawanna City School District's food pantry is open to anyone, often sending food home with students. But some thought resources like the pantry are underused, and many residents may be unaware of the healthy foods they offer.

### Residents without a car often face difficulty accessing critical services by utilizing alternative transportation modes.

Transportation is the community's greatest need, based on feedback from the provider focus group. Providers saw a need to promote alternative modes of transportation that do not require vehicle ownership. However, streets in certain areas can be unsafe for pedestrians. Some participants pointed out that the bridge over Ridge Road, which is the only route connecting the east and west parts of the city, has four lanes of vehicle traffic and a one lane sidewalk, which prevents people from walking side by side, and feeling safe while cars pass by, especially in winter when accumulated snow takes up walking space. Providers said the transportation barrier can restrict access for residents when services are on the opposite side of the city or far from neighborhoods most in need. While efforts are being made to improve bicycle infrastructure in Lackawanna, residents who bike or use other alternative travel modes do not have the same access to services as those that drive a car.

### There is a shortage of quality, affordable housing in Lackawanna.

A majority of lower-income households pay a third or more of their income on housing despite the fact that home values and rents are lower than in the region overall. Focus group participants noted that they see many families who have a hard time finding quality, affordable housing. They said that it is growing more difficult to find housing in the community. Participants said that rental property owners can be one reason why finding

**"There's no food, let alone healthy food. Refugees are used to buying things from the market fresh everyday. There's none of that."**

Source: Numbers in Need, Conversation with service providers in Lackawanna, 2019.

**Transportation is the community's greatest need, based on feedback from the provider focus group.**

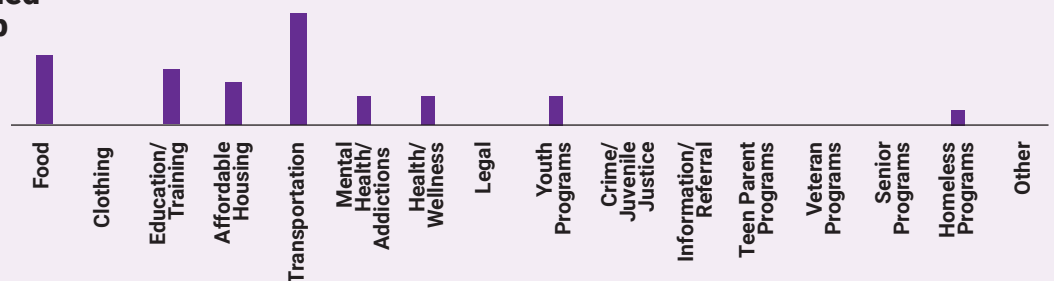
Source: Numbers in Need, Provider Focus Group feedback, Lackawanna, 2019.

**"We have many families who have that issue [with housing]. Lately finding housing in the area is harder and harder. Especially affordable rental housing."**

Source: Numbers in Need, Conversation with service providers in Lackawanna, 2019.

### Top gaps/needs identified by provider focus group

Providers identified service areas where expanded programs are needed. Transportation and mental health/addictions emerged as top needs, followed by affordable housing, and education.





## Additional Gaps/Needs Identified by Providers, cont'd.

quality, affordable housing is a challenge. Focus group participants emphasized that many landlords do not live in the community, and may not always keep up on necessary maintenance of their properties. Focus group participants said some renters deal with poor living situations, like pests, because their landlord fails to address the issue. However, most residents are not aware of the legal recourse available to them, so they do not take action against absentee landlords.

The lack of quality, affordable rental housing leads many residents to stay with friends or family, if they have that option. Others apply for housing vouchers, but some in need are unable to qualify for these programs based on income limits. The precarious living situations of renters in Lackawanna is also seen in findings from the resident survey—utility shutoffs were one of their more common concerns, and more than half of respondents are not confident in their ability to handle a \$500 emergency. The community needs more quality, affordable housing options, including rent-to-own options, and more robust financial and legal support services to improve residents' housing stability, especially for low-income renters.

### **A shortage of affordable childcare providers near work and home creates burdens for parents.**

Many parents struggle to find affordable, dependable childcare. There is only one provider offering services for teen parents in the community, and focus group participants said there is a shortage of childcare providers. Parents in the community often use informal childcare providers such as extended family and friends because they can be more accessible and less expensive. As nearly half of Lackawanna's single parents (47%) live in poverty, cost is a big barrier to childcare for many parents. Another is transportation. Daily trips to drop off young children at a childcare provider before getting to work is challenging for parents with a car, but nearly impossible for those without a vehicle. Focus group participants noted that the situations individuals face often involve compounding barriers, like a single parent without a vehicle, education, or employment history. Collaboration between providers, wraparound services, and communication with residents is key to helping parents overcome the numerous barriers to finding quality affordable childcare.

### **A wider variety of youth and recreational programs are needed to support diverse groups.**

High school graduation rates in Lackawanna are well below the regional average, pointing to a community need for academically enriching youth programs. While youth programs account for nearly half of all services in Lackawanna, there's a need for more robust, diverse programs to effectively reach more youth in need. Providers noted that youth can require additional time to complete high school due to a number of factors. Cultural and language barriers and unstable living situations are examples of factors that contribute. Focus group participants described how struggling students can be determined to graduate high school and attend college, but "age out" of the system once they turn 21. Participants said that students, and sometimes teachers, may not be aware of alternative programs and career pathways to pursue. Others felt that the cultural and symbolic significance of a high school diploma outweighed the appeal of other programs, but there are alternative college pathways for adult students without a high school diploma.

Some providers expressed a desire for the community to make efforts to celebrate its diversity, which could involve cultural events and activities for youth. Others pointed out that sports can bring youth together, but the public sports facilities in Lackawanna may not be able to fill all the community needs, especially given the growing cultural diversity of youth in the community. They also pointed out that girls are underserved in sports programs and youth programs in general. Participants noted the opportunity to work with providers from other communities to fill these gaps. Participants said there are valuable organizations already working to provide these services and connect youth to sports and other constructive programs, but there is still a clear need for more youth programs.

## **Over 1,500 renter households in Lackawanna live on low incomes and are burdened by housing costs.**

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

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**“The single most significant barrier is transportation followed by child care.”**

Source: Numbers in Need, Conversation with service providers in Lackawanna, 2019.

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**“There seems to be more programming for seniors and adults than kids. Girls are all underserved at all times.”**

Source: Numbers in Need, Conversation with service providers in Lackawanna, 2019.





## Barriers Residents Face to Programs, Services and Jobs

### Transportation is the biggest barrier to services in Lackawanna.

Most service providers in Lackawanna agree that the single most significant barrier is transportation. This is especially true for young adults, single parents, and anyone without their own car. The community is relatively rich in services, especially when considering many that lie within a short drive in bordering communities. But transportation limits access to services for many residents. The top barriers to service among respondents to the resident survey include difficulty traveling, and difficulty leaving the home due to physical limitations. This suggests that a variety of transportation solutions are needed. While many service providers are within a short walk of an NFTA bus stop, many residents do not take public transportation, finding it time-consuming and unreliable.

### Refugees and immigrants face numerous barriers to accessing services, education and employment.

Refugees and immigrants face numerous barriers in Lackawanna. While many barriers are related to culture and language, focus group participants detailed the challenges refugees and immigrants face. Participants saw how a lack of community knowledge, social networks, and cultural familiarity can make it difficult for refugees and immigrants to find higher paying jobs. Adults may be educated and credentialed in their home country, but because of language and legal barriers they may take jobs that do not apply those valuable skills and pay lower wages. Some may be unaware that they can get into college with their diploma from their own country, and instead spend time and resources to earn a high school equivalency, when it may not be required to improve their job prospects.

There are numerous programs to support these individuals, and service providers in neighboring communities, but many still face an uphill climb. Expanding access to alternative training programs and promoting these opportunities to those in need can improve outcomes for Lackawanna's refugees and immigrants, a third of whom live in poverty. Providers suggested that there is a need for a direct service delivery model to get into the communities where these groups are located to connect them with education, training, and employment.

### There is a need for increased access to alternative education, training, and job opportunities, especially for at-risk youth.

Median earnings across all educational levels are lower in Lackawanna than they are across the region, suggesting residents have limited access to higher paying jobs. There are a few major employers in the city that provide a variety of job opportunities, but jobs are less abundant in Lackawanna than they are across the region overall. The provider focus group described how this shortage of job options, along with a lack of training providers and the limited awareness of alternative career pathways, creates a critical gap in workforce development in Lackawanna. Some expressed how promotion of alternative education opportunities like workforce training is essential, especially to at-risk groups like refugees and immigrants. While there is a shortage of workforce training programs located within the community, a wide variety of programs are needed to help youth and young adults overcome the range of barriers to education and employment.

### The overlapping missions of service providers can create confusion and barriers to collaboration.

The myriad of service providers with overlapping programs that are not coordinated creates confusion, not only for residents but for some providers, especially those that are newer to the community. While Lackawanna has a provider stakeholder coalition that convenes providers and reaches out to residents through a community resource hub, one service provider mentioned that having a provider "map" or "matrix" would make it easier for providers to make referrals that are tailored to the particular needs of residents. This kind of resource, in addition to the existing stakeholder group and community resource

**"How do we get those in need of the services to where the services are being provided on a regular basis?"**

Source: Numbers in Need, Conversation with service providers in Lackawanna, 2019.

**"We're in a community that's rich in services. We can provide the services, it's the access to the services that we can't readily provide all the time."**

Source: Numbers in Need, Conversation with service providers in Lackawanna, 2019.

**"People with diplomas and licenses from other countries... now they're working in low-wage, low-skill jobs because they cannot present documentation... That creates a barrier."**

Source: Numbers in Need, Conversation with service providers in Lackawanna, 2019.



## Barriers Residents Face to Programs, Services and Jobs, cont'd.

hub, could also help improve communication with residents, which is critical. One service provider said there is sometimes a mismatch between service provision and service needs, because providers may assume what services are needed rather than hearing from the community directly about their needs.

Providers said a related barrier is a perceived lack of trust that some residents may have with service providers, and that regaining trust takes teamwork, dedication, and a lot of time. Service providers having staff members representative of the community can also improve communications with residents in need, and help overcome language and cultural barriers. Some focus group participants felt that there was a need for additional ESL training. Bringing together diverse groups to the table, including people of color, refugees and immigrants, in the delivery and structuring of programs and services can make the landscape of service providers in Lackawanna more accessible and effective.

### **More collaboration between providers and better communication with residents can improve the delivery of services.**

Providers felt that simply improving the coordination of services between providers would greatly improve service delivery without adding more services. Some participants pointed to the Lackawanna Public Library in particular as an underused resource. They said the library tracks usage of all agencies and programs and that only a few providers and residents take advantage of this critical resource. One of the top barriers among residents surveyed was being turned away due to income limits, so there is a clear need for outreach to those in need and expanded programs, especially for essential services such as food and housing. Providers realize that the insight from residents is absolutely critical to know the needs of the community and be able to provide services.

This collaboration and heightened community outreach may improve services for those most in need, like the homeless, in Lackawanna. One provider noted that the community has a shortage of homeless services, especially compared to nearby Buffalo. They said mobile service providers, which could help reach out directly to those in need in the community, could help fill this gap. Others said mobile service delivery options could help overcome the transportation barrier and improve the delivery of other important services, like education, while pointing to the successes of the community resource hub model to enhance engagement between residents and providers, and get more services to those in need.

### **Lackawanna is held back by years of population loss, economic decline, and pessimistic perceptions.**

Lackawanna has a history of economic decline. In recent years, the city's population fell slightly, as the resurgence felt in other parts of the region eluded Lackawanna. Some providers sensed that this led to a pessimistic culture that pervades the community and seems to hold back progress. Lackawanna's racial and ethnic diversity is a community asset, but the community is also stratified, with neighborhoods separated by incomes and racial backgrounds as well as physical barriers. Participants described how these divides can negatively impact all neighborhoods and groups in the community.

Focus group participants reflected on the opportunity to build and strengthen the community through cooperation among residents that may feel divided, powerless, or apathetic. At the same time, they emphasized how community members have a tremendous ability to make positive change in the community. When providers at the focus group were asked what challenges hinder providers in communicating with residents they said residents may be skeptical or distrustful of service agencies. One participant stated, "they feel like they're not being listened to." They felt that more direct outreach to residents and collaboration between providers can break down the trust barriers and empower community members to work together to solve community challenges.

**"If we [service providers] are going to be successful, we're going to have to learn to collaborate with each other."**

Source: Numbers in Need, Conversation with service providers in Lackawanna, 2019.

**"Anything that's been done [to make positive change in Lackawanna], it's [the work of] families, the community..."**

Source: Numbers in Need, Conversation with service providers in West Seneca, 2019.

**"We need to have the diversity of the community at the table to learn what they need, not us telling them what they need."**

Source: Numbers in Need, Conversation with service providers in Lackawanna, 2019.



## Promising Developments

### Programs and Partnerships

**The Lackawanna Stakeholders Coalition is increasing partnerships and communication across service providers and strengthening the safety net of human services in Lackawanna.** Members come together to host a Community Resource Hub which is open twice a month. The Community Resource Hub promotes a wide variety of services to residents, including affordable housing, Medicaid, free cell phones, addiction treatment, continuing education and jobs training, home energy upgrades, and more. In addition to the Community Resource Hub, the coalition unites agencies and provides for residents through holiday meals, food giveaways, and community events that feature health screenings, farmers markets, and other initiatives that address resident concerns and household needs.

**A local company with good-paying factory jobs is planning to relocate and expand at the old Bethlehem Steel Site in Lackawanna.** TMP Technologies (also known as Time Release Sciences) will bring more than 100 existing jobs and up to 50 new jobs to the site in Lackawanna by late 2020. Investments by the Erie County Industrial Development Agency make the project feasible and will double the space available to TMP Technologies, which has outgrown its current facility in Buffalo.

**A variety of plans, projects, and investments will continue to develop Lackawanna as a tourism destination and strengthen assets that support tourism and quality of life for residents.** Parts of Ridge Road will be revitalized beginning in summer 2020. Investments will expand walkability and bikability of roads, enhance the streetscape, increase utilization of small businesses along Ridge Road, and strengthen connectivity between businesses and major tourism attractions in the area. There is also a plan to move Lackawanna City Hall, which creates visual and physical barriers between Ridge Road businesses and the Botanical Gardens, an expanding visitor attraction with plans to add a butterfly conservatory which could draw tens of thousands of additional visitors each year.

**All students in the Lackawanna City School District now receive free breakfast and lunch as part of their school day.** Approximately 1,900 public school students benefit from this policy which began with the 2018-19 school year.

**Lackawanna is making it easier for individuals to start a business.** Entrepreneurs can begin operating a new business as soon as they file an application with the city and receive a temporary certificate of registration. Under these new, streamlined procedures that took effect in the second half of 2018, business owners no longer have to hold off opening a business until the city council votes on their application.

**NFTA was responsive to resident requests to increase public transit options extending from the First Ward in Lackawanna to destinations both within and outside of Lackawanna.** With input from the community, NFTA consolidated three routes into two that run more frequently and over longer hours to shopping, employment, and services, along routes in Lackawanna to destinations like Southgate Plaza in West Seneca and McKinkley Mall in Hamburg.

**To help address needs for expanded youth programs, Algonquin Sports is working with local providers to collaborate and expand access to programs, as well as to understand the needs of youth through a youth survey.** Algonquin Sports created a youth sports coalition in Lackawanna to bring interested stakeholders together to tackle shared goals and community needs. Expanding sports opportunities for girls is the group's current focus.

**There is movement in the community for a youth center.** A plan was presented to the city council in summer 2019 by the Lackawanna Islamic Mosque Association following its purchase of the former NYS Unemployment site along Abbott Road. Their vision for a center includes an academically enriching space where youth have access to tutoring and a library.

**Investments into a small group of student leaders called the Lackawanna Leaders is strengthening the landscape of mental health services for youth and having positive impacts on academic and behavioral indicators.** Coordinated by the Lackawanna Middle School and Compeer Buffalo, the program offers these middle school students mentoring and strategies for addressing real-life struggles with positive action.

## Models to Consider



Good things are happening in Lackawanna and beyond that are transforming the way human services are delivered. The models on this page offer two examples of ways service providers are tackling challenges in innovative ways that respond to the needs of the community.

The Numbers in Need website—[NumbersInNeed.org](http://NumbersInNeed.org)—contains additional models to consider and strategies for tackling the concerns and barriers experienced by providers in Lackawanna. These are intended to inspire solution building and spur conversation as community leaders and agency representatives consider how they might partner with each other and tailor existing programming to break down barriers that keep individuals and families in poverty.



### Transportation

## RTA Connect On-Demand

This service supplements the Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority's (RTA's) transit system with free or discounted door-to-door service in parts of the region where fixed-route service is non-existent or limited. Rides can be booked in advance through the agency's customer service, or on-demand through the Lyft app.

Throughout the Miami Valley, zones are designated for use of this service. Within those zones, users can book a free trip that either starts or ends at a RTA-fixed route service transfer point. For door-to-door trips not starting or ending at a transfer point, but still within a zone, rides are \$2 (standard fare for RTA rides). These services are available during early morning, weekend, and late night times as well, providing affordable transportation options for riders needing transportation in areas, or at times, where transit service is limited or non-existent.

[i-riderta.org/rta-connect/on-demand](http://i-riderta.org/rta-connect/on-demand)



### Refugees & Immigrants

## Tacoma Community House

Tacoma Community House (TCH) offers a comprehensive set of services to support refugees and immigrants. TCH focuses on building the self-sufficiency of refugees and immigrants from across the globe through four core program areas—education, employment, immigration services, and crime victim advocacy. Recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice, TCH provides legal immigration services to clients for free or at a reduced cost, overcoming financial barriers many immigrants face. TCH's client advocacy work focuses on undocumented women with children living in poverty who have suffered from violence and abuse, developing “safety plans” for all crime victims served. TCH also sponsors the REACH Center, a one-stop youth center that provided over 24,000 hours of one-on-one support and counseling and found jobs for over 400 youth in 2017. TCH relies on the work of volunteers to carry out its mission, but also collected over \$4.2 million in public support through contracts, foundations, and other contributors while providing services to over 3,500 clients from 105 different countries in 2017.

[tacomacommunityhouse.org](http://tacomacommunityhouse.org)



# Data Sources & Notes

**Most information in this report comes from conversations with agency providers. Data and information from additional sources outside of these conversations are listed below, unless otherwise noted within this report.**

## Defining Need, Page 2

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

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

## Landscape of Providers, Page 4

Information submitted by agency providers through a provider questionnaire updated a listing of providers developed for *Strengthening WNY's Safety Net: A Community Report for City of Lackawanna*, released in April 2014. Providers provided information on program and service locations, agency location, geographic scope and more.

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.

## Strengths of the Landscape, Page 6-7

Top Strengths (and Top Gaps/Needs)

Agency focus group participants ranked the strongest programs in the community as well as the programs where the greatest need existed. Each provider had three dots for placing next to the strongest programs and three dots for identifying where need was greatest across 16 categories of programs and services. Dots could be used to identify up to three strengths and weaknesses or several dots could be allocated to fewer categories. Highest ranking categories are those that generated

the largest number of dots.

Across Lackawanna, over 9,300 individuals live in or near poverty. Economic need is most pronounced: US Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey (5-year estimates). See NumbersInNeed.org for a map of how poverty is geographically distributed across the City of Lackawanna, at <https://numbersinneed.org/communities/lackawanna/>

About 120 seniors in Lackawanna live in poverty: US Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey (5-year estimates).

About half of people in Lackawanna who live in or near poverty have lived in their home for less than 5 years: See Numbers in Need, *Insights From Residents, City of Lackawanna*, June 2020.

The typical service provider has within a one-mile radius of its location nearly 5,500 people living in or near poverty: UBRI analysis of provider locations relative to the population living in or near poverty, as determined from the US Census, 2017 American Community Survey (5 year estimates).

## Additional Needs/Gaps, Page 7-8

... residents in Lackawanna are less likely to have a vehicle than the region overall: US Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates).

Money for food was also a common concern among residents surveyed: Insights from Residents, City of Lackawanna, June 2020.

Food programs account for a third of all services in Lackawanna: Numbers in Need, UBRI analysis of provider locations in Lackawanna, 2020.

especially the over 1,600 households without a vehicle.: US Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates).

A majority of lower-income households are pay a third or more of their income on housing despite the fact that home values and rents are lower than they are across the

region: US Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates).

Utility shutoffs were one of their more common concerns, and more than half of respondents are not confident in their ability to handle a \$500 emergency: Insights from Residents, City of Lackawanna, June 2020.

As nearly half of Lackawanna's single parents (47%) live in poverty: US Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates).

High school graduation rates in Lackawanna are well below the regional average: US Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates).

Median earnings across all educational levels are lower in Lackawanna: US Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates).

## Barriers Residents Face, Page 9-10

Lackawanna's refugees and immigrants, a third of whom live in poverty: US Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates).

Population of Lackawanna fell slightly in recent years: US Census Bureau, 2011 and 2017 American Community Surveys (5-Year Estimates).

## Promising Developments, Page 11

The Lackawanna Stakeholder Coalition: Supplementing information gathered about the coalition in the agency focus group was information posted on the coalition's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/lackawannaNYcoalition/>, retrieved in March 2020.

A local company with good-paying factory jobs: Jonathan Epstein, "Wanted: A ready-to-go factory building at the Bethlehem Steel Site," *The Buffalo News*, February 19, 2020; David Robinson, "\$22 million project will bring new factory, 100-plus jobs to Bethlehem Steel site," *The Buffalo News*, August 28, 2019.



## Data Sources & Notes, cont'd

A variety of plans, projects and investments will continue to develop Lackawanna: Ed Reilly, "Big plans for Lackawanna's central district," *WKBW*, December 19, 2019.

All students in the Lackawanna City School District now receive free breakfast and lunch: Jane Kwiatkowski, "Free Meals Announced for Lackawanna Students," *The Buffalo News*, August 30, 2018.

NYSED, NYSED Data Site: Lackawanna City School District at a Glance, 2018-19, retrieved March 5, 2020.

Lackawanna is making it easier for individuals to start a business: Jane Kwiatkowski, "Lackawanna streamlines licensing process for businesses," *The Buffalo News*, August 27, 2018.

NFTA was responsive to resident requests to increase public transit options: Jane Kwiatkowski and Barbara O'Brien, "Lackawanna increases bus service in Lackawanna, heeding resident pleas," *The Buffalo News*, January 11, 2018.

There is movement in the community for a youth center: Jane Kwiatkowski, "Youth center planned for site of proposed mosque in Lackawanna," *The Buffalo News*, July 18, 2019.

Investments into a small group of student leaders called the Lackawanna Leaders: Compeer, "Mental Health Class for Students Seeing Success in Lackawanna," January 2, 2019, available at <http://www.compeerbuffalo.org/mental-health-class-for-students-seeing-success-in-lackawanna/>



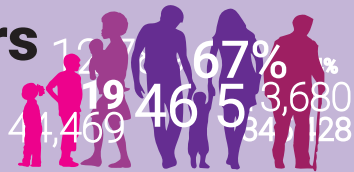
# INSIGHTS FROM PROVIDERS

## City of Lackawanna

JUNE 2020

### Numbers in Need

IN BUFFALO NIAGARA



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

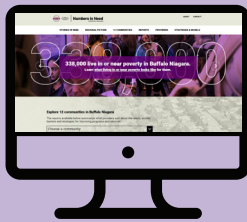


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[NumbersInNeed.org](http://NumbersInNeed.org)