TOWN OF Tonawanda

JULY 2020

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

17,427 live in or near poverty

Since 2011, the population living in poverty decreased 20%, while the total population decreased by 1%.

Numbers in Need IN BUFFALO NIAGARA

Prepared by University at Buffalo Regional Institute School of Architecture and Planning A Mobile Safety Net Team initiative established by The John R. Oishei Foundation

Since 2011, the population living in poverty decreased 20%, while the total population decreased by 1%.
Community Snapshot: Town of Tonawanda, July 2020

Town of Tonawanda

3 Reports for this Community
4 Population In or Near Poverty Across the Community
5 Poverty, Need and Economic Vulnerability
6 Factors that Matter
7 The Landscape of Providers
8 Provider Services and Resident Needs
9 Opportunities and Challenges for Providers
10 Survey Results of Economically Vulnerable Residents
11 Strategies and Models to Consider
13 Data Sources and Notes

About this Report

This report offers a snapshot of findings for the Town of Tonawanda, including the Village of Kenmore, 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.

Defining Need

More than 17,400 residents in Tonawanda 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Federal Poverty Level</th>
<th>200% of Federal Poverty Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Person Household</td>
<td>$12,760</td>
<td>$25,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Person</td>
<td>$17,240</td>
<td>$34,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Person</td>
<td>$21,720</td>
<td>$43,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Person</td>
<td>$26,200</td>
<td>$52,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
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.
With 6,200 residents in poverty, Tonawanda’s overall poverty rate (9%) is below the regional average (15%). But many residents who do not live in poverty also struggle financially—11,227 live near poverty, or on incomes between 100% and 200% of the poverty line. Altogether, about a quarter of residents in Tonawanda (17,427) live in or near poverty.

Poverty is most concentrated west of Military Road, and in a couple of small neighborhoods along Elmwood and Delaware Avenues where more than half of residents live in or near poverty. In these areas and other small neighborhoods along Niagara Falls Boulevard, Englewood Avenue, and Eggert Road, the portion of residents living in or near poverty grew by more than 20% from 2011 to 2017.
Poverty, Need and Economic Vulnerability

Overall, the number of residents in Tonawanda living in or near poverty declined between 2011 and 2017. Contributing to this was a 20% decline in the number of individuals living in poverty (from 7,753 to 6,200 between 2011 and 2017). Economic improvements in Tonawanda would have been even larger but for the 7% increase in the number of residents living near poverty (from 10,456 to 11,227 between 2011 and 2017).

Of the community’s most vulnerable populations, young adults and married couples with children are least likely to live in poverty. Meanwhile, about 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 high poverty rate. However, children in Tonawanda tend to fare better than they do across the region, which has a poverty rate of 22% for children under 18.

These percentages only tell part of the story. The 13% of children under 18 living in poverty represents almost 1,700 young people, the highest total number of any vulnerable population. While there are only 220 married couples with children living in poverty in Tonawanda, there are more than two and a half times as many single parents living in poverty (589).

Poverty rates for all of the community’s vulnerable populations are lower than the region as a whole. Nonetheless, some groups fare better than others. For example, single parents are still four times more likely to live in poverty than married couples with children.
Factors That Matter

Tonawanda’s top ten employers, which are predominantly manufacturers, account for about a third of all jobs in the community.

More than half of the jobs in Tonawanda pay less than $40,000 per year, and over a quarter pay less than $15,000 per year. One way residents can increase their incomes is through training and education. In Tonawanda, residents with even some college or an associate’s degree earn more than residents across the region with the same education.

About one in ten households does not have a car. Residents who are 65 years or older are three times more likely to not have a car than those under 65. Households without cars may experience additional barriers to services due to difficulty getting reliable and affordable transportation. A vast majority of residents drive alone as their primary mode of transportation (84%), but the majority who do not drive alone carpool (9%).

The violent crime rate has fluctuated in recent years, but in 2017 it was at one of its lowest points since 2010, while the property crime rate dropped to a seven year low in 2017. Juvenile arrests are also on the decline.

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

In a town with a rich history of manufacturing, most of Tonawanda’s top employers are still manufacturers.

Top 10 Employers, 2019

| #1          | GM Powertrain |
| #2          | Caregivers Home Care |
| #3          | Sumitomo Rubber USA LLC |
| #4          | Praxair Inc. |
| #5          | Kenmore-Tonawanda Union Free School District |
| #6          | DuPont |
| #7          | Tops Friendly Market |
| #8          | John W Danforth Company |
| #9          | J D Supply |
| #10         | ABM Engineering Services |


EDUCATION

58% of adults have a high school diploma or some college. They earn more than residents with the same education regionally.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than High School</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Some College/Associate's Degree</th>
<th>Bachelor's Degree</th>
<th>Graduate or Professional Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$25,930 $31,682 $36,957 $45,892 $52,574


HOUSING

Lower-income homeowners are less likely to be cost-burdened than lower-income renters.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNDER 65yr</th>
<th>OVER 65yr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homeowners</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renters</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


TRANSPORTATION

Adults age 65 or older are about three times more likely to be without a car than younger households.

% of Residents Without a Vehicle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNDER 65yr</th>
<th>OVER 65yr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


CRIME

Juvenile arrests decreased by 55% from 2013 to 2017.

Juvenile Arrests, 2013-2017


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

70 SERVICE PROVIDERS in the Town of Tonawanda

Types of services provided, by %

- 43% Education/Training
- 29% Food
- 16% Info/Referral
- 11% Youth Programs
- 9% Clothing
- 7% Health/Wellness
- 6% Mental Health/Addiction
- 6% Affordable Housing
- 6% Transportation
- 4% Crime/Juvenile
- 4% Homeless
- 4% Seniors
- 1% Legal
- 1% Teen Parents
- 1% Financial Literacy
- 1% Veterans

Population In or Near Poverty, 2017

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


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

Numbers in Need | Community Snapshot: Town of Tonawanda, July 2020
Tonawanda has a great need for financial and housing services, but they are in short supply.

Affordable housing or financial literacy services are offered at four sites in Tonawanda. These providers, including the Kenmore Housing Authority and the Tonawanda Department of Community Development, are located near many households in need, but residents remain underserved. On average, there are over 4,900 residents in or near poverty within one mile of each of these providers. But Tonawanda has fewer of these services per capita than any of the study region’s twelve communities. About 7,000 households spend over 30% of their income on housing—a greater number than any of the twelve communities outside of Buffalo. Tonawanda has a clear need for more affordable housing and financial services.

A small number of providers offer health and mental health services in Tonawanda.

Research published in the Journal of Social Science & Medicine shows that children in poverty are more likely to face health and mental health issues at some point in their life. Eight locations offer health or mental health services in Tonawanda. The town has about half the number of health and mental health providers per person than across the study region overall. Moreover, none of these providers are located in the western areas of town where more than one out of every three children live in poverty. Providers such as Catholic Charities, People Inc., Kenmore Mercy Hospital, and others offer a range of helpful health and mental health services. However, more of these supports are needed, especially for the over 800 families with children who live in poverty in Tonawanda.
Opportunities and Challenges for Providers

Read more Insights from Providers

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

Strengths of the System

Seventy service providers are located in Tonawanda. The majority (94%) specialize in one or two types of services, but every type of service is available in the community.

Providers are located near thousands of residents in need. On average, each service provider in the town has nearly 4,600 people living in or near poverty within one mile of its location.

Education and food programs are community strengths. Education is offered at 30 sites, and 20 providers run food programs. The number and variety of basic services are a strong foundation for social services in Tonawanda.

There are a variety of job opportunities at all education levels. Incomes tend to be higher in Tonawanda, especially for workers with less education. The number and variety of jobs in town provide economic opportunities for a wide range of residents.

Gaps

Tonawanda needs more health and mental health services. It only has half the number of providers per person than the study region as a whole.

Tonawanda has a need for more housing and financial services. About 7,000 households are cost burdened and debt was the top urgent concern of resident survey respondents.

The town’s oldest residents would benefit from a senior outreach coordinator, a compilation of resources for caregivers, and expanded options for affordable housing.

More outreach is needed to connect with the town’s most vulnerable families, identify needs, and make referrals.

Funding for free and low-cost youth programs is scarce. This limits the capacity of providers to offer programs that would benefit the town’s most vulnerable youth.

Barriers

Transportation is a barrier to programs and services, especially for families without a vehicle. While several agencies offer transportation for seniors, affordable, flexible options for working-age adults are very limited.

Lack of Internet access is another barrier for the town’s 6,200 residents without Internet access or a computer at home, especially as more resources are put online.

Better communication and closer partnerships between providers could reduce information barriers that residents face. Providers say some residents fall through the cracks because of lack of information or the difficulty they have navigating the landscape of services with the information they are given.

With no centralized spot in the community for programs, services, or information, some residents are confused about where to go for what.

Promising Developments

The Ken-Ton Family Support Center’s transportation fund reflects a unique partnership with the United Way and the school district. It enables staff to offer transportation via taxi to any family that needs it.

Some providers in Tonawanda are leveraging technology to deliver virtual services to residents in their own home, expanding options for reaching those who face transportation barriers and mobility challenges.

The town added another senior van to its fleet. This responded to an identified need and has supported a large increase in ridership.

The town has grown its community policing program utilizing the police force in reaching out to vulnerable residents and making referrals.

Amazon has plans to build a warehouse in Tonawanda that will expand job opportunities for residents.

What has happened over the past five years?

The programs and services offered by Tonawanda’s 70 service providers create a notable safety net of services for vulnerable residents, especially seniors, youth, and lower-income families and individuals. Many organizations are run by a small staff and large army of volunteers who are quick to respond when a community need is identified.

Still, Tonawanda has a smaller number of service providers per capita than most communities in the study region. The safety net is particularly thin for specialized services such as legal services and financial literacy, and for programs focused on specific vulnerable populations such as those for the homeless and teen parents.

Providers suggested that more can be done without any additional resources if communication channels were stronger and if providers worked more closely with each other in reaching out to residents, screening residents, identifying needs, and making referrals. Providers also said that expanded options for affordable housing, transportation, financial literacy, and health services could continue to lift more residents out of poverty.

Available online at NumbersInNeed.org
147 residents in need took the survey.

More than a third of residents surveyed had an urgent concern about something in their lives. Most of these concerns deal with 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. Over half of respondents have a financial challenge in their household, predominantly related to consumer, student loan, and medical debt. Additionally, compared to the 11 other communities, legal problems are more prevalent among respondents with urgent concerns in Tonawanda.

Difficulty traveling is a barrier to services for many residents. Although there are multiple bus routes in the community, only 7% of respondents use public transit as their primary way of getting around. Driving a vehicle is the most common form of transportation, but the costs of gas, insurance, repairs, maintenance, and car payments are a burden for many car owners.

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

Most respondents use their own vehicle to get around. Those who do not drive are twice as likely to use a taxi, rideshare service, Medicaid van, or volunteer service than to take public transportation. Biking or walking and getting rides from family or friends are also more popular than taking public transportation.

Over half of respondents are dealing with financial concerns. Consumer debt was the most common financial concern, followed by student loan debt and medical bills.
Leverage partnerships, volunteers, and technology to improve transportation options for people with mobility challenges or access barriers.

Many service providers offer transportation services for their clients. However, insights from providers show that these organizations are often limited by a shortage of funding and resources and other issues. By coordinating with other organizations, leveraging technology, and recruiting volunteers, service providers can overcome these barriers and accrue the resources they need to provide reliable transportation to the residents they serve. The need to be resourceful and inventive will only increase with an aging population, especially for seniors and those with mobility challenges in more rural areas that are disconnected from public transportation. This approach can help providers improve their ability to provide services and reach more people in need.

**Potential Action Steps**

Provide funding, vehicles, drivers, and other resources for non-emergency medical transportation.

Leverage technology to reduce transportation costs, such as by using electric or hybrid vehicles, or route-optimization technologies.

Facilitate carpooling among current and potential customers of service providers.

Partner with ridesharing services like Uber and Lyft to provide reliable, low-cost transportation to customers of service providers.

Form volunteer organizations to provide transportation to those with mobility challenges or access barriers who need to get to critical services, like healthcare or education.

**Potential Actors in the Community**

NFTA

Private ride-sharing companies

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

Health service providers

Religious organizations

Volunteers

Technology companies

**Models to Consider**

PSTA Direct Connect
*Pinellas County, Florida*

[www.uber.com](http://www.uber.com)

Second Chances Garage
*Frederick, MD*

[secondchancesgarage.org](http://secondchancesgarage.org)
Expand aging-in-place supports for seniors.
The population of adults age 65 and over in Buffalo Niagara is increasing, and there are now over 63,000 older adults in the region with a disability. Many older adults, including those with disabilities, prefer to remain in their own home for as long as they are able, according to insights from residents. For these older adults, having access to services that allow them to live comfortably at home and maintain their quality of life is vital. Proper planning for aging in place is critical. Expanding services that help older adults prepare to age in place, by planning for finances, changes in health, mobility challenges, and other concerns, is integral to ensuring they maintain their quality of life for as long as possible.

Potential Action Steps
Increase awareness and access by seniors to affordable services for aging in place available through volunteer-based programs, church-based outreach programs, and area colleges and universities. Distribute this information through senior centers, senior programs, FeedMore WNY, doctor offices, and other community-based organizations.
Raise awareness and participation in senior dining programs, including Erie County’s new congregate dining program which offers restaurant options. Increase participation by restaurants that are easily accessible by older adults, or are located near public transit routes.
Engage local media in raising awareness of valuable programs and services for older adults.
Explore and raise awareness of low-cost options for using technology that supports seniors in aging in place with meal and grocery delivery, pet food delivery, online communications with health care providers, and more. Raise awareness of low-cost, or free shipping and delivery services, including discounts for individuals with Medicaid and Electronic Benefit Transfers (EBT).

Potential Actors in the Community
Housing service providers
Senior service providers/senior centers
Media
Transportation service providers
Religious organizations
Businesses
Local governments

Models to Consider
Canopy of Neighbors
Buffalo, NY
canopy.clubexpress.com

Hearts and Hands
Various locations in Erie and Niagara Counties
hnhcares.org
Data Sources & Notes

Cover

Defining Need, Page 2
Minimum Wage: New York State Department of Labor, Minimum Wage (effective 12/31/19).

Poverty Map, Page 4

Poverty, Need and Economic Vulnerability, Page 5

Factors that Matter, Page 6
Top employers were first downloaded from ReferenceUSA and mapped to confirm location within the boundaries of the 12 communities. Top businesses by number of employees were cross-referenced with the Buffalo Business First Book of Lists (2018) to ensure accuracy in number of employees at the business location, when available.
Education: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 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.
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
Provider Data: Information submitted by agency providers through a provider questionnaire updated a listing of providers developed for the 2013 community report for Tonawanda. 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 2013.

Providers and Resident Needs, Page 8
Provider Data: See note for page 7.

Opportunities and Challenges for Providers, Page 9
Insights from Providers, Tonawanda, July 2020. Provider insights come from one-on-one interviews and a questionnaire of providers conducted during March and April 2020. Although a provider focus group was scheduled, it has to be canceled twice, first for a snowstorm and then for reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Survey Results of Economically Vulnerable Residents, Page 10
Insights from Residents, Town of Tonawanda, July 2020. Survey findings come from 147 surveys completed at 17 locations and online. In-person surveys were completed between January and March 2020. The online survey was available beginning in March 2019 and was closed to responses in March 2020.
COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT
Town of Tonawanda
JULY 2020

Numbers in Need
IN BUFFALO NIAGARA

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

Visit us online to learn more about this and other communities in need across Buffalo Niagara.

NumbersInNeed.org