

COMMUNITY

SNAPSHOT

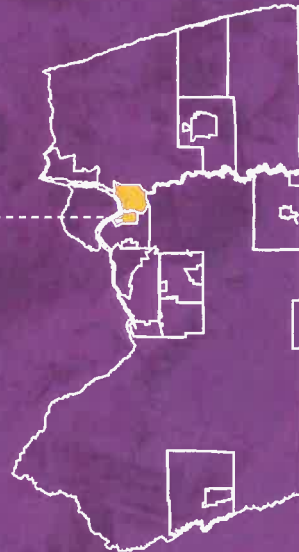
12,660+

live in or near poverty

CITIES OF Tonawanda and North Tonawanda

FEBRUARY 2020

Since 2011,
poverty
decreased by
7%, and total
population
decreased by 2%.



**Numbers
in Need**

IN BUFFALO NIAGARA



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



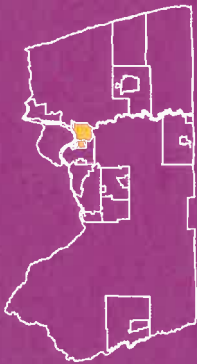
Prepared by



University at Buffalo
Regional Institute
School of Architecture and Planning

Cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda

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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

The Cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda are distinct communities with unique resources. They share a border and some similar challenges, and are treated as a single study region for this research. This report offers a snapshot of findings for the Cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda ("the Twin Cities"), with new data on the community's population that lives in or near poverty. The Cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda includes the perspectives of human services providers, the landscape of providers, and strategies that could strengthen the safety-net for individuals and families.

Research in this report was led by the University at Buffalo Regional Institute in partnership with the Mobile Safety-Net Team. It was commissioned by The John R. Oishei Foundation. This work updates and expands upon a community report completed by the research team in 2014.

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



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Defining Need

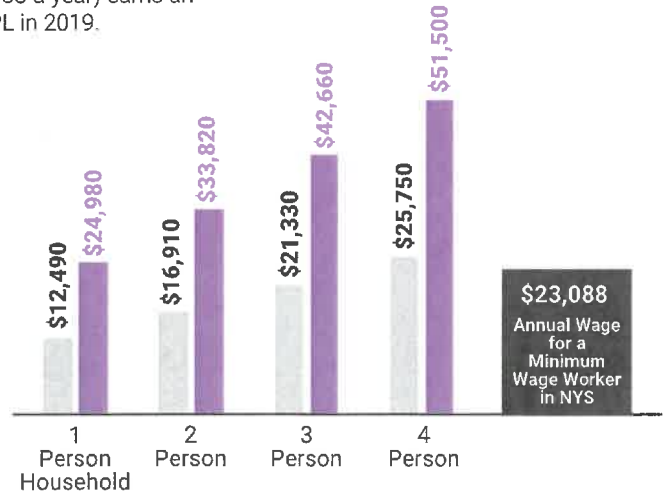
Over 12,660 residents in the Twin Cities live in or near poverty with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty line.

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

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

Federal Poverty Guidelines, 2019

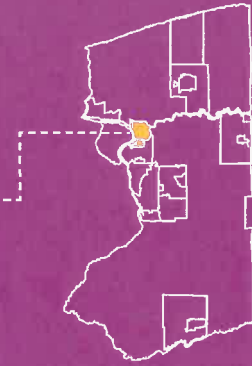
Legend: Federal Poverty Level (light purple), 200% of Federal Poverty Level (dark purple)



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

Reports for this Community

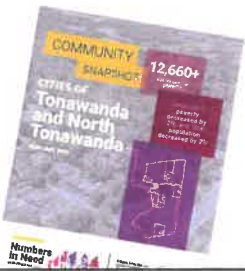
This report is part of a comprehensive suite of reports for the **Cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda**, one of 12 representative communities in the Buffalo Niagara Region selected for assessment and investment as part of the Numbers in Need project.



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.



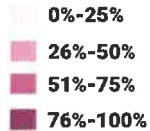
Visit us online at NumbersInNeed.org

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 Cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda

Population in or Near Poverty, 2017



Among the total population of 45,744

10% ARE IN POVERTY

4,706

live on incomes below the federal poverty level.

+

17% ARE NEAR POVERTY

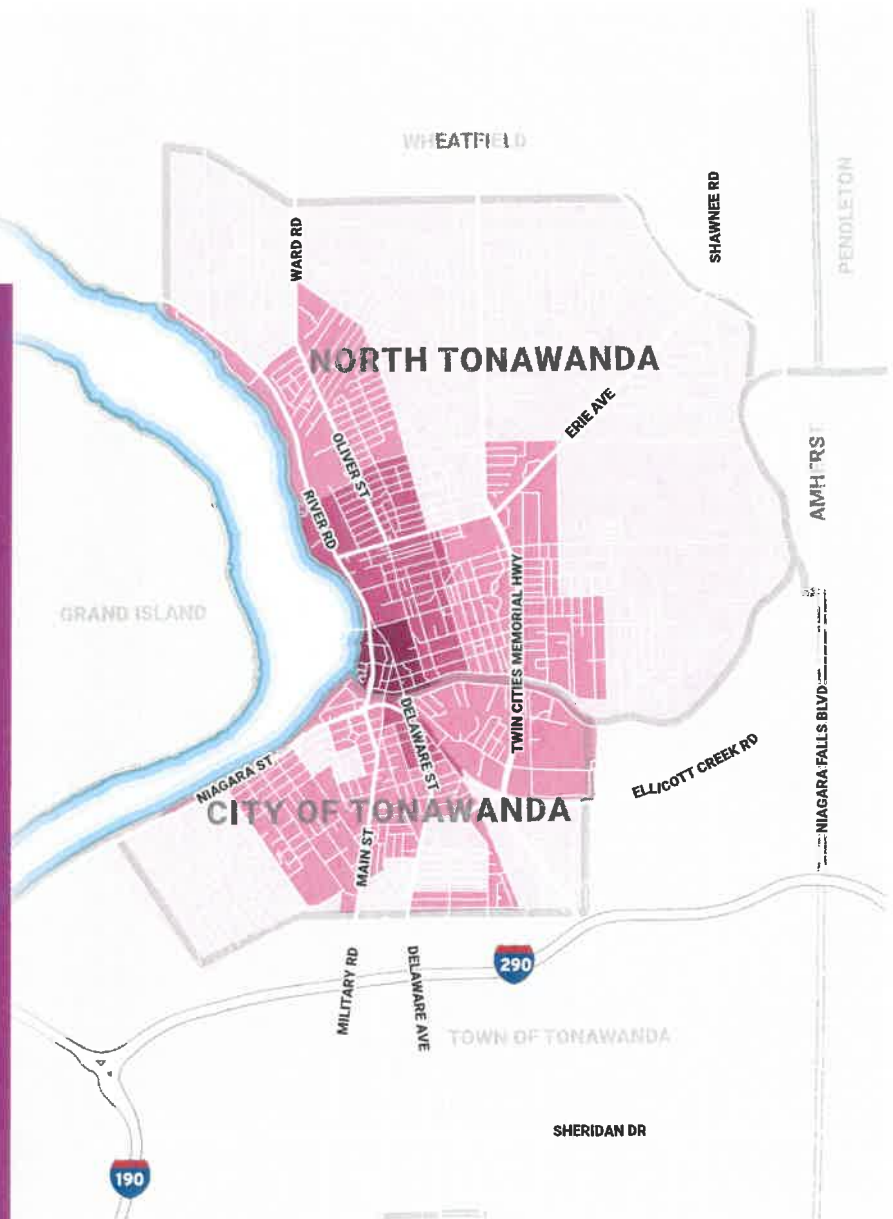
7,962

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

28% ARE IN OR NEAR POVERTY

12,668

residents are doing poorly or struggling financially.



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

More than one in four Twin Cities residents live in or near poverty.

With about 4,700 residents in poverty, the Twin Cities' poverty rate (10%) is below the regional average (15%). Still, many residents struggle financially—almost 8,000 live near poverty, or on incomes between 100% and 200% of the poverty line. Poverty is most prevalent downtown and in older neighborhoods that developed along the Niagara River adjacent to former and current industrial development. From 2011 to 2017, the total number of Twin Cities residents living in or near poverty declined just 1%. Since 2011, the number of residents living in or near poverty increased in the neighborhoods just north of North Tonawanda's downtown area.

Poverty, Need and Economic Vulnerability

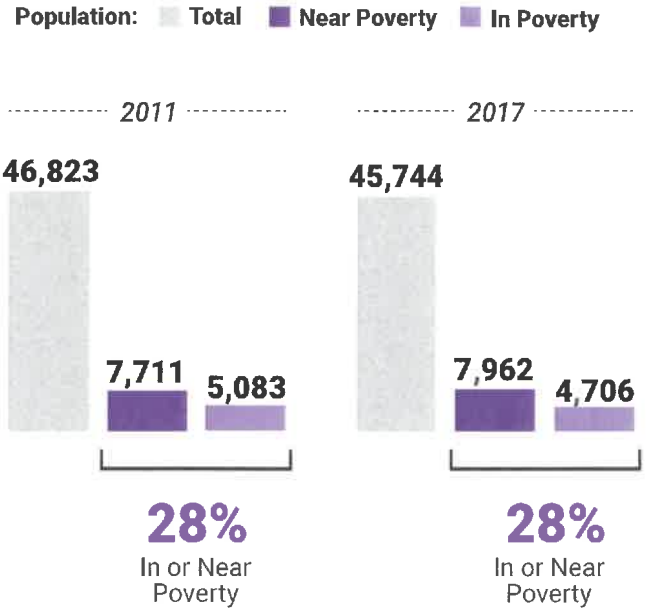
Since 2011, slightly fewer residents live *in or near* poverty in the Twin Cities. The percentage of people living in poverty dropped from 11% to 10% between 2011 and 2017, while the percentage of people living near poverty held steady at 17%.

Of the community's most vulnerable populations, married couples with children are by far the least likely to live in poverty. Meanwhile, a third of single-parent households live in poverty. Single parents face additional challenges that exacerbate poverty, such as a single income, childcare costs, food costs, housing costs and more. Among all other vulnerable populations in the Twin Cities, about one in ten residents live in poverty.

However, these percentages do not tell the whole story. The 10% of children under 18 living in poverty represents 1,137 children. In comparison, only 622 residents make up the 32% of single parents living in poverty. Over 700 young adults between the ages of 25 and 34 live in poverty in the Twin Cities, the second highest number in poverty among vulnerable populations after children under 18.

While the number of residents living in poverty dropped 7% between 2011 and 2017, the number near poverty increased by 3%.

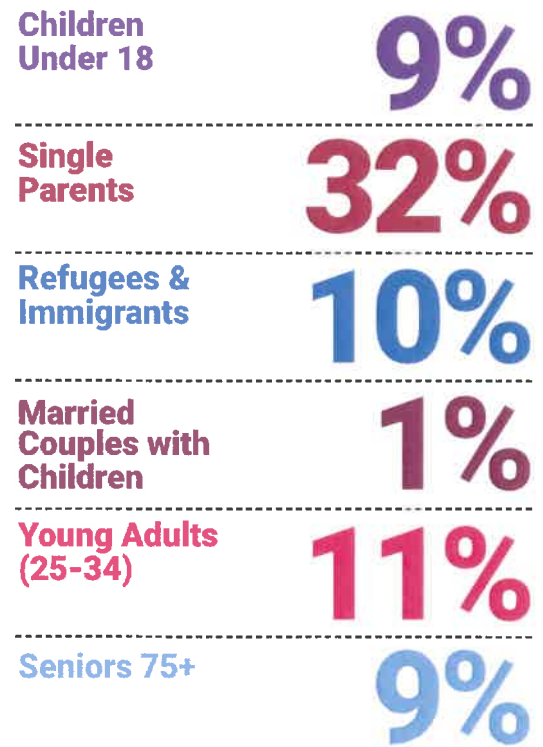
Total Population and Population In or Near Poverty, 2011 and 2017



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

In the Twin Cities, married couples with children rarely live in poverty, but a third of single parents do. About one in ten people in all other vulnerable populations live in poverty.

Vulnerable Populations In Poverty, 2017



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

Factors That Matter

Historically, the Twin Cities were known as a center of industrial employment. Today, fewer industrial firms remain, joined by retailers, healthcare providers, and logistics companies as some of the community's top employers.

About two thirds of the jobs in the Twin Cities pay less than \$40,000 per year, slightly lower than the percentage across the region. One way residents can improve their incomes is through training and education. Only 23% of residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, but the median income for those with a bachelor's degree is about 50% higher than the median income for those with a high school diploma.

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

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

The increase in juvenile arrests in recent years may suggest access challenges to youth programs.

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

Top 10 employers account for 25% of all jobs in the Twin Cities and generate job opportunities for residents in healthcare, retail, manufacturing, and logistics.

Top 10 Employers, 2019

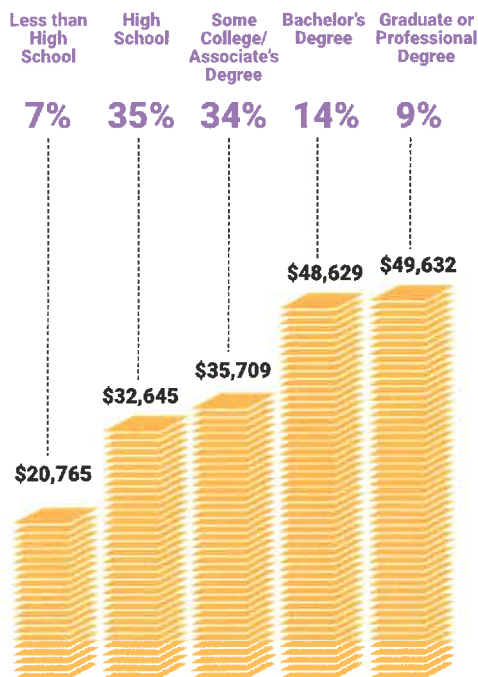
- | | |
|--|--|
| #1 De Graff Memorial Hospital | #6 Conagra Brands Inc. |
| #2 North Tonawanda City School District | #7 NOCO Energyol |
| #3 Walmart Supercenter | #8 Kenmore Record-Advertiser |
| #4 Live Hose Co. | #9 Tops Friendly Market |
| #5 Tonawanda City School District | #10 Livingston International Inc. |

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

EDUCATION

42% of residents have a high school diploma or less and limited earnings capacity.

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



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

HOUSING

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

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



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

TRANSPORTATION

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

% of Residents Without a Vehicle

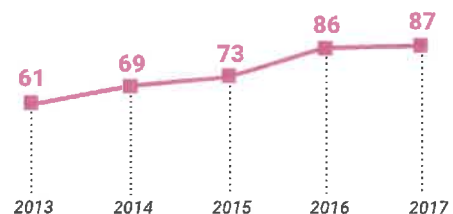


Source: American Community Survey, 2017 5-Year Estimates.

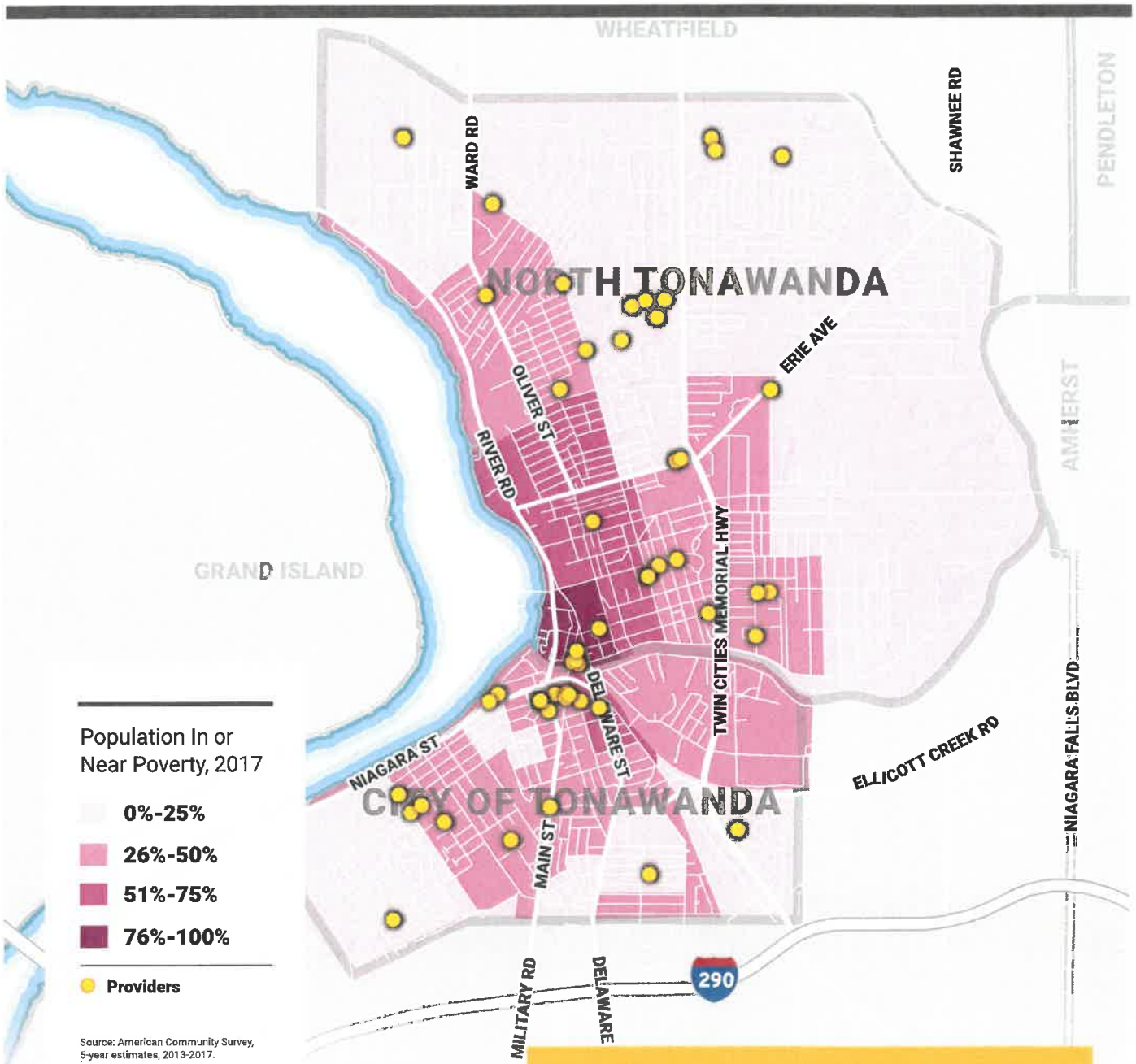
CRIME

Juvenile crime is on the rise—arrests increased by 43% between 2013 and 2017.

Juvenile Arrests, 2013-2017



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



The Landscape of Providers

52

SERVICE PROVIDERS
in the Cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda



See more online

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

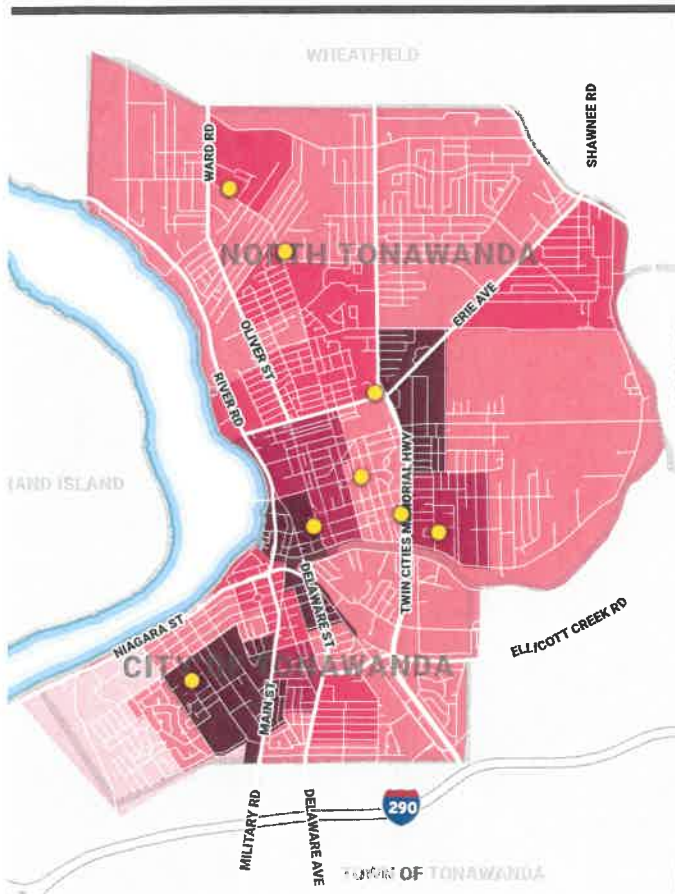


Types of services provided, by %

56%	Education/ Training	8%	Veterans
42%	Food	8%	Clothing
33%	Youth Programs	8%	Health/Wellness
27%	Transportation	8%	Crime/Juvenile
21%	Info/Referral	4%	Legal
19%	Seniors	2%	Teen Parents
19%	Mental Health/ Addiction	2%	Homeless Services
13%	Housing/Utility	2%	Financial Literacy

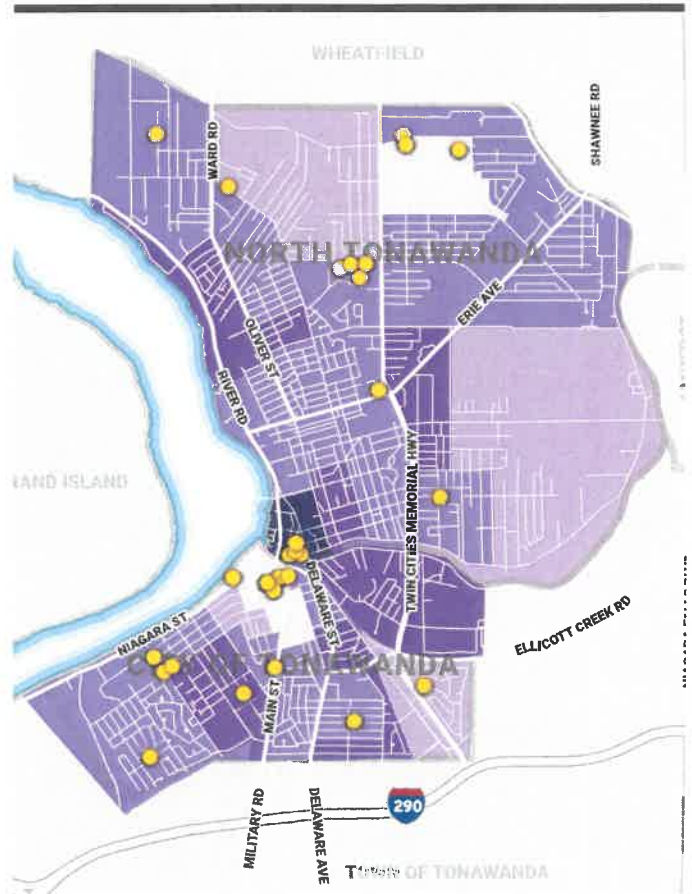
Providers and Resident Needs

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



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

% Adults (25+) without a College Education, 2017



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

In some neighborhoods where cost-burdened households are concentrated, housing and financial support services are not as accessible.

Eight different organizations in the Twin Cities provide financial or housing services. These include the City of Tonawanda Housing Authority, Belmont Housing, and Bishop Gibbons Apartments. These providers are typically located near affordable housing options where cost-burdened households are most concentrated, such as the Twin Cities' downtown area. However, thousands of cost-burdened households are dispersed in other parts of the community. Expanding the number and diversity of housing and financial supports can help the community's nearly 4,700 cost-burdened households alleviate their financial burdens.

Education is the Twin Cities' most common service, but adult training options are limited.

Education is offered at 29 sites in the Twin Cities, but nearly all programs are for youth. The City of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda school districts are great assets, but adult course offerings are limited. Public libraries and senior centers also offer education, but not formal workforce training. Other agencies offer education as part of mental health services, such as Horizon Health Services. The community's most suitable training option for adults is the Catholic Charities' Workforce & Education site in North Tonawanda. Additional training and adult education options could improve the earning potential for many of the 14,000+ adults in the Twin Cities without college experience.

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?

The Twin Cities continues to have a sizable number of providers to help more residents climb out of poverty and achieve economic self sufficiency. The programs and services offered by the community's 52 providers create a particularly strong safety net of services for vulnerable populations such as Veterans, seniors and lower-income families and individuals.

A conversation with providers suggests that a range of efforts could help continue the decline in the number of individuals living in or near poverty. These include improved information and awareness of existing resources, expansion of transportation alternatives, greater coordination of services, and investments into additional supports for children and families.

Providers spoke positively about the opportunity for enhanced collaboration, service expansion and community outreach at the existing North Tonawanda Community Resource Hub and a new resource center planned for the North Tonawanda City School District.

← Available online at NumbersInNeed.org



Strengths of the System

Over 50 service providers are located in the Twin Cities. At 17 provider locations, residents can receive at least four different kinds of programs and services.

Over half of providers offer some form of education and training or programs for youth. While providers described some gaps in the landscape of services for youth and families, they also identified existing youth programs as a top strength of the community, contrary to what residents felt. The Twin Cities also has a few providers offering education or workforce training for adults.

Many providers throughout the community offer assistance to individuals and families in need of food, clothing, and housing. The number of providers available to address these basic needs are seen as a community strength by agency focus group participants.

Gaps

Providers say drug and alcohol use is common among students and parents. They also see a growing complacency around drug use prevention.

Providers see the need for additional transportation services to support households without a vehicle and fill gaps created after the NFTA cut routes and reduced service in the community.

Providers say that mental health challenges are at the root of many poverty-related concerns. Yet these services are often uncoordinated or unavailable in the community and therefore can be difficult for residents to access.

Providers say lower-income families and children in poverty would benefit from additional supports such as parenting programs, youth programs, childcare, youth mentoring, and early literacy programs.

Barriers

Providers say the lack of transportation options is a barrier residents face to programs, services and jobs. Providers add that the need for residents to own a car contributes to consumer debt.

Some services are not promoted as much as they were when the Tonawanda News produced a daily paper.

Vulnerable residents such as Veterans often lack awareness of what programs and services are available to support them. Sometimes, even providers lack the information they need to make referrals to residents.

Employers in the Twin Cities are hiring but job seekers do not have the necessary skills to the higher-wage job openings.

The lack of internet access, mobile devices and/or familiarity with technology make it increasingly difficult for some providers to connect with residents.

Promising Developments

The North Tonawanda Community Resource Hub brings together under one roof a large number and wide range of service providers. This reduces the need for residents to leave the community to access important services.

The North Tonawanda School District will soon open a resource center for all families in the school district.

Niagara Community Action Program successfully used Strengthening WNY's Safety Net - A Community Report for Cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda, 2014 to secure funding to support a wide range of programs that benefit residents in the Twin Cities and throughout Niagara County.

Tonawanda City School District reports that an increasing number of students are attending BOCES for vocational training in the trades. For some occupations, graduating students are almost guaranteed employment.

Survey Results of Economically Vulnerable Residents

264 residents in need took the survey.

Almost a third of residents surveyed had an urgent concern about something in their lives. A majority of those with a concern are worried about debt. It is possible that residents take on debt because they do not have enough money to pay for necessities like food, utilities, childcare, uninsured medical care, or transportation. About three in four respondents earn a household income of less than \$36,000 per year. Residents with financial challenges mostly deal with consumer/credit card debt, student loans, and medical bills.

The second-most frequent barrier to services for respondents is difficulty traveling. Although there are four bus routes in the community, only five percent of respondents use public transit as their primary way of getting around. Some residents see transit as an impractical method of transportation. Driving a vehicle is the most common form of transportation, but gas, insurance, 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.



30%

REPORTED HAVING SOME TYPE OF URGENT CONCERN


TOP 3 URGENT CONCERNS REPORTED BY THESE RESIDENTS

Outstanding Debt -----> **52%**

No Money for Food -----> **37%**

Utility Shut-Off -----> **19%**

HEALTH CARE NEEDS

37%  of vulnerable residents are in need of some type of healthcare but can't afford it.

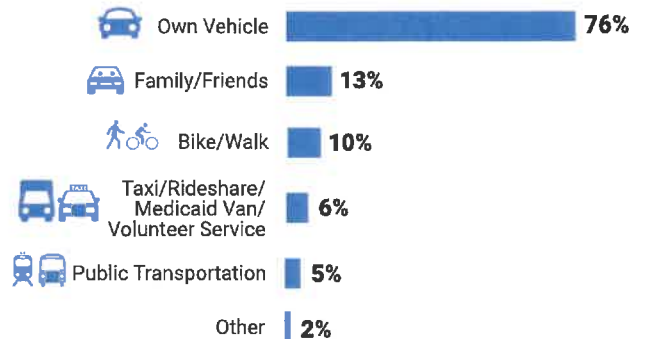
Despite the prevalence of health insurance coverage, many residents still need medical care they cannot afford, possibly because some care is not covered by insurance or co-pays are too high.



TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

Most residents in the Twin Cities drive to get around. Focus group participants and survey respondents said public transit is not a convenient option in the community, which may explain why those without cars rely on friends/family, bike or walk, or use on-demand transportation services instead.

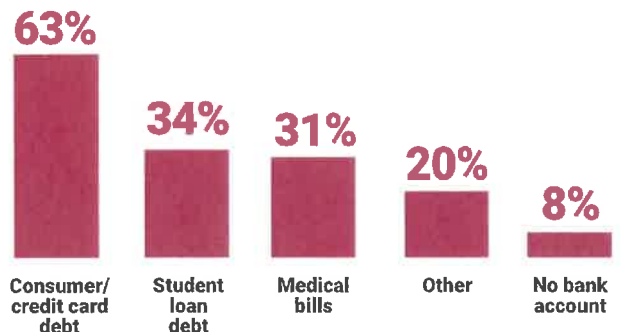
How respondents get around



FINANCIAL NEEDS

Nearly two-thirds of respondents are dealing with financial concerns. When income is not enough, residents may take on debt to handle necessary expenses or emergencies. Residents trying to increase their earning potential may take on student 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 the Twin Cities.

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.



Workforce Development

Reduce barriers to training and employment by incorporating wraparound support services into training programs.

Many students in training programs require additional support to achieve successful outcomes. Single parents looking to enhance job opportunities need child care, which is often cost prohibitive. Many need transportation to get to training and job opportunities. Some need help transitioning into careers after being homeless or incarcerated. Many others need soft skills development, job placement, literacy training, counseling, and other assistance. Without support services to address these issues, trainees are more likely to drop out of programs or lose their jobs. But insights from providers suggest not enough workforce trainers in the region provide such wraparound services. Offering comprehensive support services can enable more students to succeed in training and in their future careers.

Potential Action Steps

Partner with transportation providers or volunteers to provide or help pay for transportation for those without a personal vehicle or with mobility challenges.

Provide support or counseling services for students and trainees dealing with addiction or other mental health issues.

Offer parents in workforce training programs assistance to help them find, finance, and utilize childcare.

Provide individual academic advisement and case management to learn each individual's unique challenges and address their needs for training and support services.

Deliver training for soft skills, such as time management, resume writing, financial literacy, and preparation for job interviews.

Potential Actors in the Community

Public school districts

Colleges and universities

Workforce development organizations

Business community and industry organizations

NYS Department of Labor and other government agencies

Economic and community development organizations

Models to Consider

Jeremiah Program
Minneapolis, MN and various locations across the U.S.

jeremiahprogram.org

Mobile Career Center
Florida
floridajobs.org



Regional Strategies and Models to Consider, cont'd.



Health & Mental Health

Bring health and mental health services to residents in need through community outreach, mobile services, and online tools.

For many residents, access to healthcare services can be limited, especially those without a vehicle, in rural areas far from doctors and hospitals, and others facing economic, social, or language barriers. Thousands of Buffalo Niagara residents face such obstacles—over 60,500 households do not own a car, nearly 36,000 people with a disability live in poverty, and over 18,000 individuals have limited English fluency. Mobile health clinics can overcome these barriers by bringing essential health care services directly to residents in need where they live and work. Similarly, proactive community outreach by medical professionals, and online tools and resources can increase awareness and access to health care services, especially for those who face physical, cultural, or financial barriers.

Potential Action Steps

Operate mobile health clinics that travel to communities lacking convenient access to key health services. These can provide low-cost alternatives to primary care, screening and testing, mental health counseling, and other important services, including care outside of normal business hours.

Leverage data to determine where and how mobile health clinics can best reach underserved populations.

Travel to workplaces, and contact businesses, to directly reach people in need of health care services.

Consult with individuals experiencing financial, legal, cultural, or psychological barriers to accessing health care.

Provide consultation services to increase enrollment in health insurance and set up appointments with primary care or other physicians.

Advocate for policies that can facilitate the adoption of information technology for health solutions.

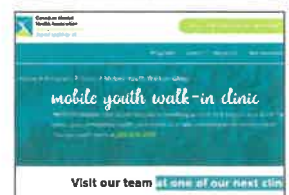
Potential Actors in the Community

- Hospitals
- Health clinics
- Physicians
- Health care providers
- Health insurance companies
- Local governments
- Colleges and universities

Models to Consider

The Health Wagon
Various locations in Virginia
thehealthwagon.org/hwwp

Mobile York South Simcoe (MOBYSS)
Ontario, Canada
cmha-yr.on.ca/programs/youth/mobyss



Data Sources & Notes

Cover

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

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 2019.

Minimum Wage: New York State Department of Labor, Minimum Wage (effective 12/31/18).

Poverty Map, Page 4

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

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, 5-Year Estimates, 2017.

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

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

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

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, 5-Year Estimates, 2017.

Provider Data: Information submitted by agency providers through a provider questionnaire updated a listing of providers developed for the 2014 community report for the Twin Cities. Providers provided information on program and service locations, agency location, geographic scope and more. Most service providers are not-for-profit and public sector providers.

Tax records available through the IRS and National Center for Charitable Statistics were used to identify new not-for-profits with locations in the community since 2014.

Provider Services and Needs of Residents, Page 8

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

Provider Data: See note for page 6.

Opportunities and Challenges for Providers, Page 9

Insights from Providers, City of Tonawanda and City of North Tonawanda, February 2020. Provider insights come from an agency focus group held in September 2019 with fourteen provider representatives.

Survey Results of Economically Vulnerable Residents, Page 10

Insights from Residents, City of Tonawanda and City of North Tonawanda, February 2020. Survey findings come from 264 surveys completed at eighteen locations and online in July and August 2019.

Strategies and Models to Consider

Households without a vehicle, individuals with a disability living in poverty, and individuals with limited English fluency. American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates, 2017.

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT Cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda

FEBRUARY 2020

Numbers in Need

IN BUFFALO NIAGARA



A Mobile Safety Net Team
initiative established by
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Visit us online to
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this and other
communities
in need across
Buffalo Niagara.



NumbersInNeed.org