

# Creating Measurable Community Impact

A REPORT COMMISSIONED BY:



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**PHILANTHROPY**  
FOR THE **BUSINESS SAVVY.**

## Dear Members of the Akron/Summit County Community:

In 2015, Akron Community Foundation celebrates our 60th year of building community philanthropy and improving the quality of life in our great community. To commemorate this milestone, the community foundation partnered with The Center for Community Solutions to identify the key quality-of-life issues facing Summit County – today and moving forward.

The Center for Community Solutions is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank that specializes in applied research, public policy and advocacy. They assisted us by compiling data on a variety of health, social and economic indicators. During this process, several pervasive and emerging issues surfaced as requiring our collective attention: Employment, Early Childhood Poverty, Food Insecurity, Transportation and a Growing Senior Population. Each issue is complex yet measurable, multifaceted and cross-cutting, and all require collaboration to improve our community's quality of life.

In this report, you will find the community's condition in each of these key areas and opportunities for improvement. The impact of each issue is measurable, offering us the ability to track our progress over time.

Work to address some of these is already well underway, thanks in many cases to leadership and funding provided by your community foundation. We are eager to partner with fellow leaders, funders, nonprofits and philanthropists to move the needle even more.

Thank you for your ongoing support of your Akron Community Foundation. Here's to many more decades of partnership for the permanent good of our community.

Sincerely,



John T. Petures Jr.  
President & CEO  
Akron Community Foundation



John F. Garofalo  
Vice President, Community Investment  
Akron Community Foundation



# The Issues

What are the most salient issues facing the residents of Summit County? Although community needs and challenges are wide-ranging, four key issues and one emerging need rose to the top: **Employment, Early Childhood Poverty, Food Insecurity, Transportation** and a **Growing Senior Population**. These areas were identified through a review of data from the American Community Survey, the Public Assistance Monthly Statistics from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, the Scripps Gerontology Center at Miami University, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the



U.S. Census, the Summit 2020 Priority Indicators Update Report and Community Health Needs Assessments from Summit County hospitals, the Northeast Ohio Regional Impact and Outcomes Indicator Report and the Summit County profile from The Center for Community Solutions, and conversations with staff at Akron Community Foundation.

Each of the five topics is introduced with a description of the issue in Summit County, supported by available data. We identify challenges to addressing the issue in the community. Finally, next steps are suggested for moving forward. The report also highlights “bright lights” in the community — programs that are already making a difference.

Our neighbors across Summit County who are confronting these issues, like all of us, have complex lives with an array of challenges. Throughout the report, we highlight programs that bridge the key issues, exploring connections and relationships among the chosen areas. Additionally, there are underlying topics that are inextricably linked to several of the key issues. For example, a good education mitigates the developmental impacts of poverty in early childhood and increases the likelihood of being employed at a good job with a living wage in adulthood. This living wage, made possible by higher educational attainment, can reduce or eliminate food insecurity for the household and keep childhood poverty at bay in the next generation. Community resources like **Summit Education Initiative**, which articulates major educational challenges, encourages and facilitates collaborations, and develops prototype programs to support children from early childhood through postsecondary education, and **Bridges Summit County**, which brings people from all sectors, races and political persuasions together to better understand poverty and work strategically to stabilize the community, are essential to addressing the underlying topics that affect so many of the issues explored in this report.

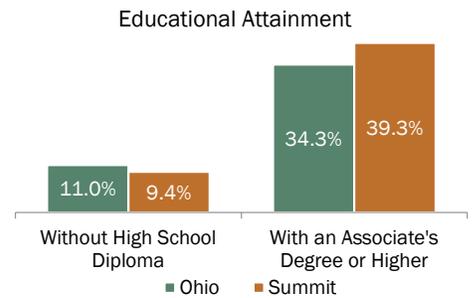
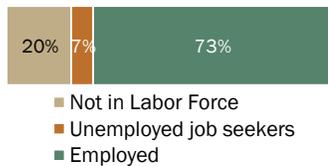
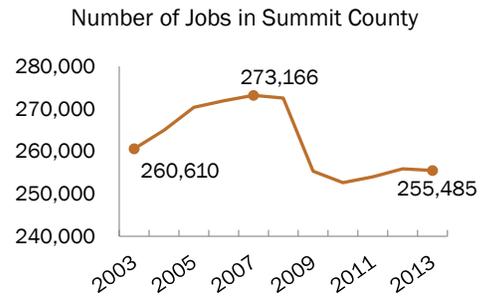


# Employment

## The Issue

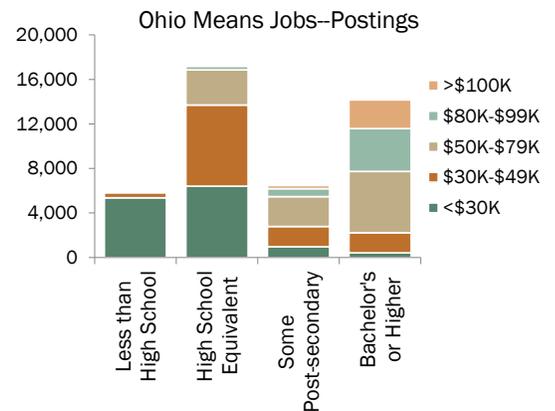
The employment rate has partially recovered after dropping during the Great Recession, but Summit County has 5,000 fewer jobs than it had a decade ago and more than 12,500 fewer jobs than at its peak in 2007. Currently, four of Summit County's top five sectors (health care and social assistance, retail trade, accommodation and food services, and administrative and waste services) have average wages below the area median income of \$48,836 per year.

Seventy-three percent of Summit County's working-age adults are employed, which is about equal to the state average of 72 percent. Compared to Ohio, Summit County residents have better educational attainment that is more likely to prepare them for the labor market: Fewer people lack a high school credential, and more people have at least an associate's degree.



## Challenges

- Employment depends on the availability of good, stable jobs. But in the current economy, many of the jobs are in lower-paying service sectors such as accommodation and food services (average annual pay: \$13,696) and retail trade (average annual pay: \$26,461).
- Living-wage jobs for people with little or no vocational credentials or low educational attainment are rare. According to job postings on **Ohio Means Jobs** in late 2014, less than 9 percent of the jobs available to people with less than a high school equivalent paid more than \$30,000 per year.
- Skill mismatches can make available well-paying jobs difficult to fill. The same Ohio Means Jobs search revealed more than 17,300 open jobs requiring only a high school equivalent. Sixty-three percent of them are listed as paying more than \$30,000 per year, above the median annual earnings of \$26,921 for Summit County residents with a high school equivalency.
- Traditional hiring practices can keep people out of the workforce due to applicants' lack of knowledge about professional expectations or employers' requirements for education or training. Additionally, employers may be reluctant to hire someone with a criminal record or someone who has not had steady work in the recent past.

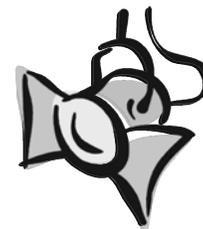


## Next Steps

- Continue to collaborate on a regional level to attract stable, well-paying jobs to Summit County and Northeast Ohio.
- Work with employers to move to skills-based hiring practices, where people looking for jobs are assessed for relevant skills by a third party and then included on a list of potential hires when an employer is looking for someone with their skill set.
- Continue to emphasize collaboration between workforce organizations, employers and neighborhood-based services to facilitate opportunities for training and stable employment in Akron's hardest-hit neighborhoods.

## Bright Light: Collaboration to Advance Growth and Opportunity

Several key funders in the Akron community are working together to support a collaborative, interconnected approach to improving job creation, job preparation and job access outcomes in the community. The initiative, supported by the **John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**, along with **Akron Community Foundation** and other members of the **Fund for Our Economic Future**, connects regional and community-based efforts to create economic growth and increase opportunities for residents to benefit from that growth.



To improve job creation outcomes in Greater Akron, the collaborators are supporting regional economic intermediaries, including **JumpStart**, **MAGNET** and **BioEnterprise**, in increasing their assistance to growing companies in the community. JumpStart intends to add staff in Akron to serve the growing entrepreneurial community here. MAGNET will identify Akron-based manufacturers who are candidates to grow via the innovation-based services provided by the nonprofit. BioEnterprise will provide support to the promising biomedical companies that are emerging from the community's research institutions, including the **Austen BioInnovation Institute** and the **University of Akron**.

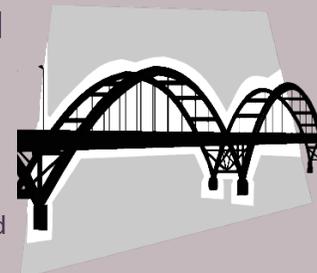
The collaboration is also supporting efforts by Summit County Executive Russ Pry to improve job preparation outcomes in Summit County. Executive Pry has identified this improvement as a key priority of his administration, convening stakeholders from across the community to address this issue. As part of this work, the Fund for Our Economic Future is funding an assessment of existing job preparation efforts that will be concluded in early 2015. Also, local foundations, the **United Way**, the county and the Fund for Our Economic Future are partnering to support the development of a skills-based hiring program that will allow employers to more easily identify job seekers who have the skills necessary to succeed. Implementation is expected in the first quarter of 2015.

Increasing access to job opportunities, particularly for residents in economically distressed neighborhoods, is the third key element of the collaboration. The partners supported a property survey of the City of Akron performed in 2014 by the **Thriving Communities Institute**. City officials will use the survey to identify promising neighborhoods for commercial and industrial redevelopment.

## The BRIDGE between EMPLOYMENT and TRANSPORTATION

With the help of a grant from Akron Community Foundation's **Women's Endowment Fund**, homeless single mothers now have access to their own cars, allowing them to expand their employment opportunities, go back to school for a degree, and get their children to school and appointments more easily.

The Mobile Moms program, run by **H.M. Life Opportunity Services**, connects parents with used cars so they have reliable transportation and are no longer burdened with the often lengthy travel times and unpredictable schedules of public transit. By providing these women with cars and opening up opportunities that are not located along a bus line, the Women's Endowment Fund is addressing a key priority: economic empowerment for women. To qualify for the program, applicants have to be working or attending school at least 20 hours each week. They also must have a valid driver's license and proper insurance, two professional letters of recommendation, and a budget showing they can afford to pay for gas and other expenses.



In 2009, Amanda Talick became the first person to receive a car through the Mobile Moms program. Amanda's 1997 Mercury Sable was purchased with the help of WEF's grant, and her life hasn't been the same since. "Before (getting the car), I had to leave at 4 a.m. with my four children to catch a bus and get myself and them to school," she said. "Now, it's so much easier in the morning for us to be able to have breakfast together and get in the car instead of having to wake up extra early. It immensely changes your whole priority."

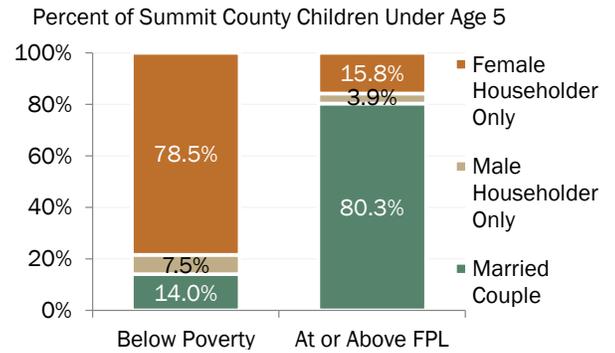
A similar program at **ACCESS Inc.**, funded by WEF in 2014, provides reliable used cars to women transitioning out of homelessness so they can find employment and become economically self-sufficient.

# Early Childhood Poverty

## The Issue

Twenty-nine percent of children in Summit County under age 5 live in poverty (more than 8,400 kids). Children raised in poverty often experience fewer rich learning environments, less parental nurturing, and high levels of toxic stress that can adversely affect their development. Minority children and those in female-headed households are disproportionately impacted by poverty, leading to continued disparities in health, social and economic outcomes.

Research indicates that, even more than at other times in life, poverty in early childhood impacts outcomes like eventual labor market success. Interventions such as accessible, high-quality preschool have been shown to have lifelong benefits. Additionally, policies and programs that increase families' incomes, such as the **Earned Income Tax Credit**, have been shown to benefit these children.



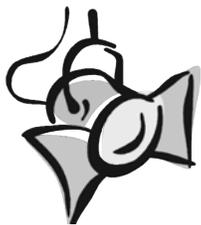
Race	Poverty Population: Children <5 years old	Overall Population: Children <5 years old
White	42.7%	72.7%
African American	45.1%	20.4%
Two or More Races	12.2%	6.9%

## Challenges

- Parents in poverty bear heavy burdens of providing for their children and working jobs at low wages, often without the support of a spouse or other partner. They may not have the time, energy or knowledge to nurture their children at the same levels as households with married couples or those not coping with economic stressors.
- Quality child care and preschool is limited and expensive, placing it out of the reach of many families. According to the **Early Childhood Advisory Council**, there are 2.5 children for every one early learning and development program space in Summit County, and 5.6 children for every accredited, quality-rated early childhood education space.
- Although the region is no longer in a recession, economic recovery is slow, and living-wage jobs needed to pull families out of poverty are not plentiful or easy to secure without training. Almost two-thirds of families in poverty in Summit County have at least one worker but do not make enough money to rise above the poverty threshold.

## Bright Light: Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority's Early Childhood Initiative

The **Early Childhood Initiative** serves **Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority** public housing residents and those in the **Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8)**. It also provides fee-based services to residents in the Cascade Village neighborhood. The initiative offers high-quality early care and education to approximately 3,000 children under age 5, addressing the majority of outcomes identified by Summit County's **First Things First** initiative. The Early Childhood Initiative builds trusting relationships with AMHA families, giving parents the power, skills and knowledge they need to be their child's first and most important teacher. Participants are also referred to community partners for services that are not part of ECI. The Early Childhood Initiative encompasses three program components:



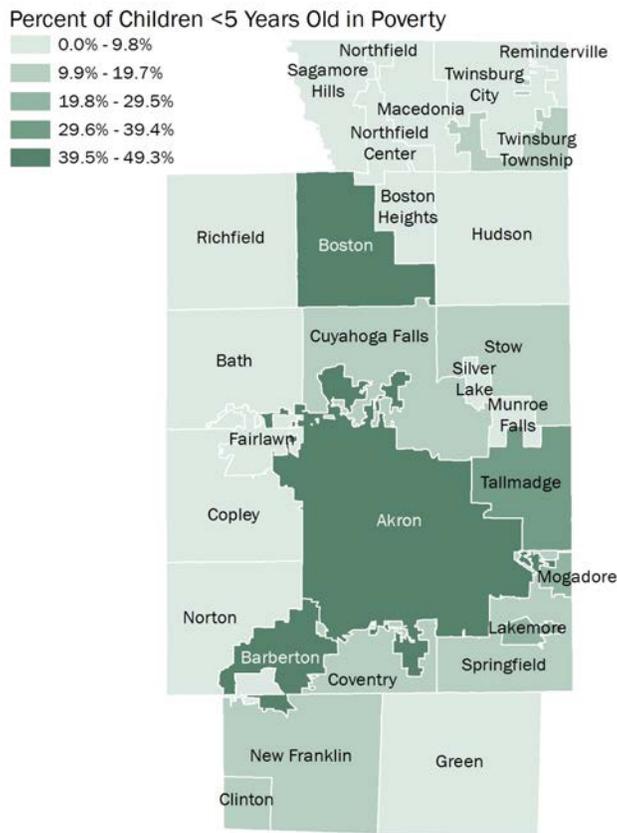
**Family outreach events:** Opportunities for families to come together for fun, fellowship and education about early childhood learning and development.

**Home visitation, including the evidence-based Parents as Teachers curriculum:** A home visitation program that provides training to parents, as well as health, vision, hearing and developmental screenings for their children. The program helps families get referrals for needed services, work toward self-sufficiency, and expand their education and workforce skills.

**Maternal depression:** Depression screenings, referrals to mental health providers, and on-site support groups for new moms.

## Next Steps

- Caring for children is expensive, and unexpected or unplanned pregnancies can place a large burden on parents struggling with low-wage jobs and poverty. Increased access to long-acting reversible contraception and family planning services, as well as financial assistance for these resources, allows people to have control of their reproductive choices and increase the chance that parents are prepared for children when they do have them.
- Access to high-quality preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds, regardless of family income or ability to pay, will help mitigate the economic effects of poverty by providing a strong educational and developmental foundation that serves children into adulthood. The **Summit Education Initiative** and **First Things First** work collaboratively with partners around the community to meet the educational needs of children and ensure they are ready for kindergarten.
- Work with children to develop social, emotional and behavioral skills to reduce preschool expulsion rates and build a strong foundation for later in life. The Toddlers and Preschoolers Succeeding program, run by **Child Guidance & Family Solutions**, offers a collaborative approach to this work.
- Continue to encourage preschool programs across Summit County to adopt the **Transition Skills Summary**, a standardized report card that focuses on essential pre-K skills for children transitioning to kindergarten, including action steps parents can take to help children make improvements.
- Parent outreach and trainings give parents the tools and knowledge they need to provide a nurturing home environment for children, regardless of income level. Helping parents cope with economic stress while pairing them with community resources such as mentors can ameliorate the effects of poverty on child outcomes. **Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids (SPARK)** helps parents be their child’s first teacher and provides educational components to improve academic performance when kids enter school. Collaborations like the **Summit County Fatherhood Initiative** help men become involved and committed fathers. In some communities, innovative programs draw on the experience of senior citizens to meet the needs of others.
- Fundamentally, pulling families out of poverty through workforce training, higher wages and better job opportunities for parents also impacts the well-being of children.



## The BRIDGE between EARLY CHILDHOOD POVERTY and EMPLOYMENT

The **Reach Opportunity Center** at Summit Lake provides educational services for residents from cradle to career. The community-based education and support center offers preschool services, kindergarten classes, academic support for school-aged children, adult education, and job-readiness skills. The center also helps residents address issues that may be barriers to achieving their educational goals.



**Early childhood programs:** Educational services for young children include programming from the **Akron-Summit County Public Library**, **Early Head Start**, **Head Start** and **Akron Public Schools**.

**Adult programs:** Programs for adults focus on job readiness and parenting, including GED classes, **Bridges Out of Poverty’s Getting Ahead** trainings, computer classes, vocational certificates and parenting workshops.

# Food Insecurity

## The Issue

The **United States Department of Agriculture** defines food insecurity as “the lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members, and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods.” Food insecurity can rise and fall in households, depending on employment situations and competing financial obligations such as housing or medical bills. Food insecurity can result in negative health, social and emotional consequences for people of all ages.

According to **Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap**, Summit County was home to 85,570 food-insecure people in 2012. That means 15.8 percent of the overall population, and 22.4 percent of children, were food insecure. Thirty-seven percent of people struggling with food insecurity have household incomes above 185 percent of the poverty level and are ineligible for income-based government nutritional assistance.

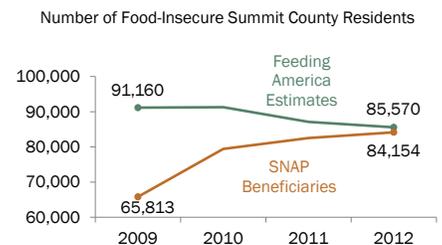
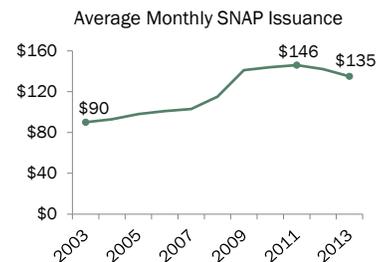
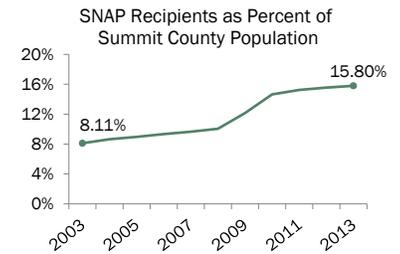
Over the last decade, the number of Summit County residents receiving **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** benefits (food stamps) has increased 95 percent to 86,578 people in 2013. Although the average benefit issuance increased by \$56 per month between 2003 and 2011 (to \$146 per month), it has declined to \$135 per month in the last two years. Growing food insecurity is mirrored in trends of food pantry use, which increased 75 percent in Summit County since 2006.

## Challenges

- The lack of local data is a barrier to addressing food insecurity. Feeding America food insecurity numbers are calculated using economic characteristics and state-level estimates of food need. Food pantry visit counts are helpful but do not represent food need on a per capita basis. SNAP caseloads are dependent on eligibility requirements, so everyone in need of food assistance may not be eligible for or enrolled in SNAP. Furthermore, this data is available only at the county level.
- Community resources are not always sufficient to meet food need and demand. Pantries and community meals sometimes do not have enough food to distribute to those who need it — a recent survey of food programs across Ohio reported 24 percent did not have enough food to meet demand.
- Food pantries often do not have the capacity they need to serve consumers in the most efficient way. This can take the form of limited shelf and refrigerator space, a shortage of volunteers, or a lack of technology, among other things. For example, 59 percent of food programs in Ohio rely entirely on volunteers, and 24 percent had to cut back on services in the past 12 months due to economic conditions.
- Policy can exacerbate food insecurity. Legislation that controls funding and eligibility requirements for programs such as SNAP and **Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** impacts the reach and impact of food assistance. For example, a change in Ohio’s administration of SNAP in 2013 left 134,000 people at risk of losing their food stamp benefit if they were unable to comply with a work requirement. Additionally, reductions in other government programs, such as those that offer cash assistance (**Temporary Assistance for Needy Families** at the federal level, or **Ohio Works First** at the state level), utility assistance (such as the **Home Energy Assistance Program**) and child care assistance, stress limited budgets and redirect household funds formerly available for food purchases.

## Next Steps

- Continue to increase the capacity of local food programs by encouraging volunteerism, food donations, and funding to increase equipment and technology.
- Support state and federal policies that strengthen food security.
- Research estimation methodologies and work with local food pantries and the food bank to estimate local-level food insecurity data.
- Tap into local food production as a potential solution to both local hunger and the need for employment opportunities.

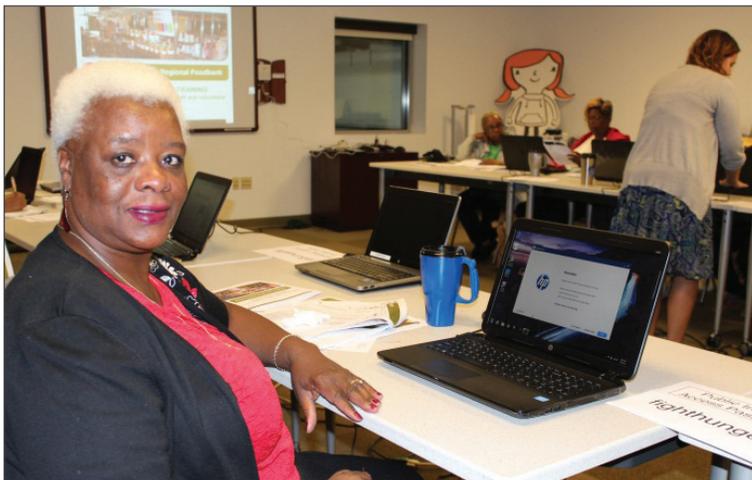


## Bright Light: PantryTrak

The **Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank** has utilized grant funding from **Akron Community Foundation** to help implement a new online data management tool for its member agencies in Summit County. PantryTrak is a tool designed specifically for emergency feeding sites that helps programs streamline their registration process and submit more accurate reports on unduplicated clients and households served. For the food bank, the PantryTrak initiative is helping to eliminate paperwork, access critical client data, and link clients to other services they may need.



More than 30 Summit County member agencies were recently awarded equipment such as laptops, tablets and PCs to assist them in implementing PantryTrak. The equipment was distributed to many grateful agency representatives at a training conducted at the food bank.



One of those receiving a brand new laptop was Phyllis Smith of **Faith Temple Church** in Akron. "I'm excited because everything is changing in the way we collect data," she said. "PantryTrak will help us eliminate paperwork and will help our church become more modern."

She also shared that, when preparing for her monthly food distribution, things can get a little hectic as people line up for food. "Some things get missed when it gets busy," she said. The new system will help with tracking and make the process easier for community members who come to her church for food.

## The BRIDGE between FOOD INSECURITY and EMPLOYMENT

Expansion of the local food movement has the potential to both increase community access to healthy foods and create local jobs for food growers, producers and processors. The 2015 Summit County Local Food Systems Assessment, prepared for Akron Community Foundation, examines key assets, opportunities and barriers to the growth of the local food system and the attainment of these two goals.

Some community leaders are already using the community food system to assist adults with developmental disabilities, low-income people and immigrants. **ASIA Inc.**, **Hattie Larlham** and **Ms. Julie's Kitchen** provide training programs and job opportunities for these populations, particularly in local food production and processing. The future development of resources, such as a community commercial kitchen and an agricultural and food enterprise center, would further increase job opportunities by giving local food entrepreneurs a solid foundation of support to get their businesses off the ground.

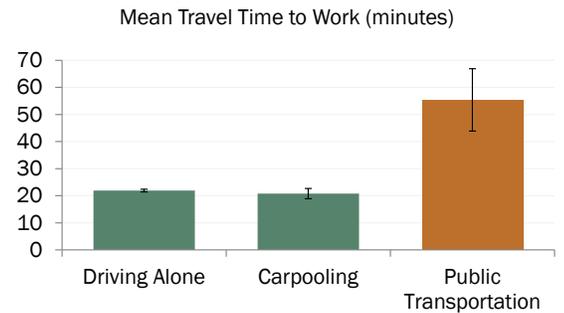


The expansion of local food into more mainstream markets — including grocery stores, where people buy food year-round, and neighborhoods, where healthful foods are not currently available — would increase access to food and associated jobs. Establishing the necessary supply chains to achieve a larger scale is a significant hurdle. However, with the Local Food Systems Assessment and the work of the **Summit County Food Policy Coalition** and other stakeholders, the local food movement in Summit County is on its way to growing in new and innovative ways.

# Transportation

## The Issue

In 2013, 15 percent of households in Akron did not have a personal vehicle, including many of Summit County's most vulnerable, such as the poor and elderly. These people rely on alternative transportation such as buses, bicycling and walking. The ability to safely and conveniently use alternative transportation methods is important for carless households to get to work and school. As businesses increasingly develop in more suburban areas that are less-served by multiple transportation options, transportation becomes a social equity issue and can either contribute to or act against inequalities in a community. Citizens who do not have access to a personal vehicle can be isolated from employment, shopping and educational opportunities. When alternative transportation modes are available, they often take much longer than driving a personal vehicle.



## Challenges

- Fostering support for a transportation network of choices is difficult since the vast majority of people drive. Ninety-one percent of households in Summit County have at least one vehicle, and only 2.4 percent of workers do not have access to a personal vehicle. It can be a struggle to get drivers to understand the widespread community benefits of a robust alternative transportation system, and to help them understand that they can be drivers and cyclists/transit users.
- Development has shifted so that jobs and other opportunities often occur outside the central cities where many transportation-limited people live. Although about 71 percent of jobs in the Akron metropolitan area are located in areas with public transit service, only about 21 percent of the population can reach a typical job in 90 minutes via public transportation. This isolation of people from opportunity is amplified due to low-density, dispersed suburban building patterns that make frequent and effective transit service more difficult to deliver.
- Young adults are expressing a desire to live in urban areas with infrastructure that allows them to safely walk or bike to employment, shopping and recreational opportunities. At the same time, Akron's urban residential and commercial structures are aging and increasingly suffering from blight and vacancy.
- Northeast Ohio has many urban areas and significant intraregional movement. Coordinating alternative transportation services and infrastructure across county boundaries, transit authorities and funding streams can be complicated.

## Next Steps

- Continue working toward a connected, multi-modal transportation network that considers the needs of all users, integrating transit, pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular infrastructure.
- Prioritize the revitalization of connected, dense urban neighborhoods, enabling people and jobs to be located in close geographic proximity where the alternative transportation network is the most robust. Take advantage of opportunities for transit-oriented development.
- Utilize technology to improve the public transit user experience. For example, make real-time, accurate travel information for **METRO Regional Transit Authority** service available on the Internet and via a cell phone application.
- Increase the frequency of bus service where possible to maximize convenience and efficiency for transit users.
- Prioritize bicycle and pedestrian considerations in street redesign projects, including the consideration of road diets, on-street bicycle infrastructure such as bike lanes, and crosswalk design. Continue to work with the **Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study** to leverage regional transportation funding to encourage a collaborative, rather than prescriptive, approach to street design.



## Bright Light: Building a Better Block

Creating a place that people want to go can be a catalyst for directing attention to transportation improvements. Akron's Better Block pilot will do just that. The initiative is modeled after projects that began in Texas and spread across the country. It is based on the belief that when everyday people work together, one block at a time, they can rebuild and transform their community into a place people want to live, work, play and socialize. Better Block participants adopt a "pop-up" approach by selecting a



block; planning something new; and bringing their vision to life with built, borrowed, found and occasionally bought materials that temporarily transform the area with new bike lanes, landscaping, shops, gathering places and street art.

Akron has selected Temple Square in the North Hill neighborhood for its first Better Block project in the spring of 2015. Decades of abandonment and population decline have affected this neighborhood, which was once one of the fastest-growing in the city. True to its history of racial and ethnic diversity, the neighborhood is now home to immigrants from southeast Asia and Latin America, offering opportunities to engage new Akronites in building community. Transportation played a key role in the

development of North Hill. Located high on a summit and separated from the rest of Akron by the Little Cuyahoga Valley, the area was largely undeveloped until a reliable bridge and trolley line were constructed. Now, it has a leading role in nurturing community and creating a place that people want to go at a scale they can walk and bike.

## The BRIDGE between TRANSPORTATION and CHILDHOOD POVERTY



A partnership among the Safe Routes to School program of the Ohio Department of Transportation, the City of Akron, Akron Public Schools, and the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study created a District-Wide School Travel Plan that outlines strategies for making traveling to and from school safer for children. The Safe Routes to School initiative promotes safety for children who are walking and bicycling to school and encourages active transportation as a solution to the growing child obesity rate.



The plan incorporates information from many sources, including parent and school principal surveys, student travel tallies, and walking audits to identify key priorities. By focusing on education, encouragement, enforcement, engineering and evaluation, the plan addresses changes needed in both physical and social environments to better

allow children to walk or bike to school. The plan also includes information on funding opportunities to create safer routes to school.

A community-wide approach to helping children walk or bike to school safely is especially helpful for families struggling with poverty. Children in poverty are more likely to come from families that lack personal vehicles, or they may have parents whose work schedules make it difficult to personally transport children to school. Additionally, studies have shown that physical activity positively affects cognition, potentially improving educational outcomes and giving children a better chance of leaving poverty in adulthood.

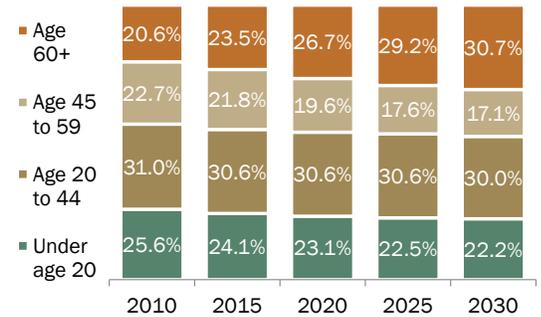


# Growing Senior Population (Emerging Issue)

## The Issue

In 2010, people ages 60 and older made up 20.6 percent of Summit County's population. According to projections by the **Scripps Gerontology Center at Miami University**, seniors will outnumber children in Summit County by 2020 and grow to 30.7 percent of the population by 2030.

The Scripps Center predicts the number of people age 60 and older with a moderate physical and/or cognitive disability in Summit County will grow 46.6 percent from 3,848 people in 2010 to 5,640 people in 2030. The number of Summit County seniors with a severe physical and/or cognitive disability is projected to grow 49 percent from 7,630 people in 2010 to 11,365 people in 2030. Additionally, the number of very old individuals (those 85 and older) and individuals with independent living difficulties or self-care difficulties, who are most likely to need long-term care services and living supports, are projected to grow by approximately 60 percent each.



The senior population has a different set of mobility and health care needs than the overall population, and living on a fixed income comes with its own economic challenges. As the proportion of seniors in Summit County grows, community needs

	2012 percent	2012 number	2030 projection	Percent increase
<b>Independent Living Difficulty</b>	12.8%	10,227	16,502	61.4%
<b>Self-Care Difficulty</b>	7.9%	6,360	10,185	60.1%

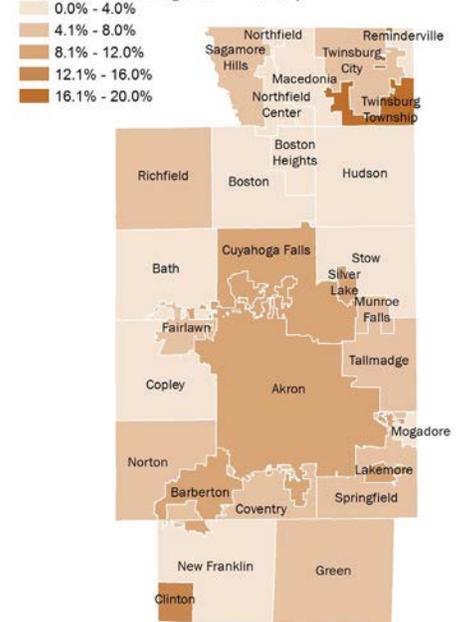
will shift toward increased alternative transportation and handicapped-accessible living, working and playing facilities.

## Challenges

A growing senior population can result in changes in the social, economic and health characteristics of the community. Research indicates that seniors favor aging in place, meaning their homes and communities will need to adapt to best meet their needs.

- The capacity for delivery of senior services will need to grow, requiring additional funding to avoid waiting lists. Demand for caregivers will increase and transportation needs will change, among other things.
- There will increasingly be older employees in the workforce, bringing unique challenges in managing them and accommodating their needs. There will also be a growing number of retirees. Some estimates project that by 2016, two-thirds of job openings in Ohio will be to replace retirees. At the same time, almost a quarter of the labor force will be older than 55.
- Changes in the age distribution of the population impact tax collections. On average, income taxes, taxable expenditures and property taxes tend to decline as people age beyond the 45- to 54-year-old bracket. A recent study predicted that these and other factors related to demographic change will create a net \$1.9 billion shortfall in the state budget by 2035.

Percent of Seniors Age 65+ in Poverty

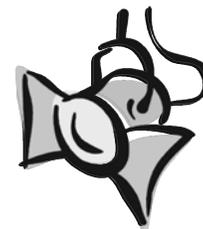


## Next Steps

- Conduct a community assessment of the aging population to better understand emerging local trends, needs and service gaps. Begin considering potential strategies to address findings.
- Work with service providers in the community who are already serving the senior population to prepare for growing numbers of older adults.
- Encourage a collaborative, community-based approach to addressing the needs of a growing senior population, such as that demonstrated by the **Senior Independent Living Coalition** in Summit County.

## Bright Light: Services for Aging in Place

**Jewish Family Service of Akron** is helping people live independently in their own homes as they grow older. As part of their care management services, social workers visit clients in their homes and make action plans that address the services they need to maintain their level of activity and connections in the community. Other assistance includes counseling about assisted living options, transportation to medical appointments and community events, and help with government benefit applications. In addition, JFS provides community education to inform seniors and their families about needed services. Their **Volunteer Guardianship Program** pairs volunteers with indigent seniors who have no one to care for them. They also provide a budget and financial program for seniors to help them maintain monthly budgets and learn how to avoid scams. Supported in part by the **Gay Community Endowment Fund of Akron Community Foundation**, JFS also offers individual and group counseling and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender senior citizens.



## What is the role of philanthropy in preparing for a growing population of older adults?

It can be difficult to tackle an emerging issue like the growth of the senior population. While projections and studies are available, the impact of changing demographics can be very different across local communities. Here are some ways that funders and donors can begin to prepare for the coming shift:

- Adopt a long-term planning horizon — begin thinking about the implications of an aging community now and encourage partners to do the same.
- Support studies that examine local data to better understand the impact of an aging population on a county and community level, and support plans that incorporate community actions based on these studies.
- Plan for increased funding needs for senior-serving programs. Also, in funding decisions, consider the value of intergenerational programs and those that address the isolation of senior citizens.
- Learn about and advocate for policies that assist low-income and disabled seniors in obtaining the resources they need to be healthy and comfortable.

## The BRIDGE between SENIORS and FOOD INSECURITY

**Mature Services Inc.** offers food assistance to seniors on limited incomes or with limited mobility through emergency food orders, home-delivered meals, congregate meals and a farmers market program for seniors. They fulfill approximately 200 emergency food orders per month, of which about 85 percent go to households with seniors. Additionally, home-cooked, frozen meals are delivered to the homes of 450 seniors every week, and the program even allows clients to choose their entrees and side dishes from a menu of options.

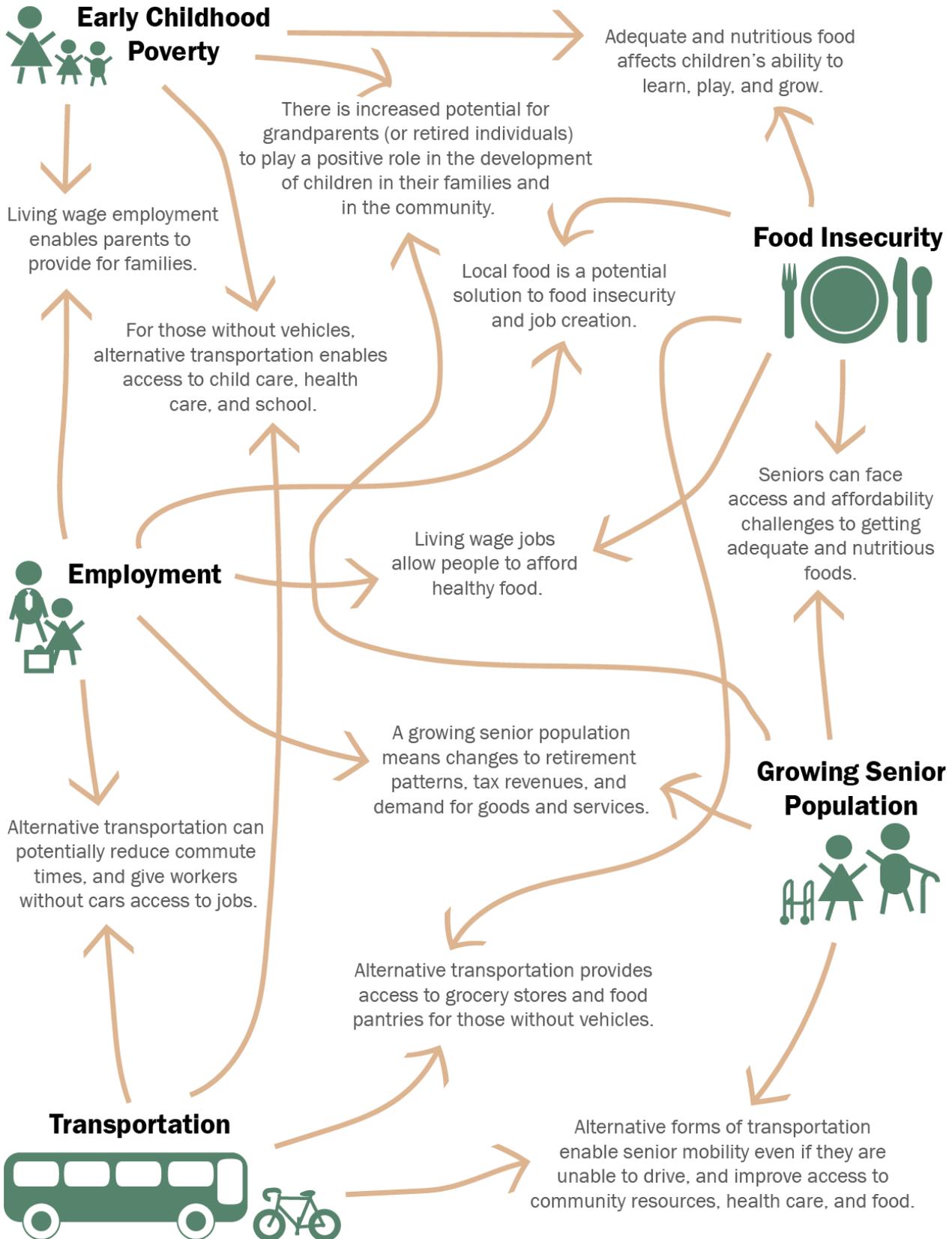


Through the congregate meals program, hot lunches are served to seniors five days a week in AMHA buildings across the county. The **Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program** provides 554 seniors in Summit County with \$50 worth of vouchers for purchases from farmers markets. The program is in such high demand that the waiting list was capped in July 2014 at more than 300 people.

This multi-faceted approach to addressing food insecurity among seniors is only part of Mature Services' role in addressing the needs of seniors in the community. They also provide employment assistance, home care and supportive services, and mental health and substance abuse programs.

# Connectivity and Linkages

Changes in each of the issues identified in this report ripple into other parts of the community, affecting the needs of people in Summit County and reflecting the potential for wins in one area to beneficially impact other issue areas.



## Thanks and Acknowledgments

Thank you to the following community leaders who, along with many other valued people, dedicate their time to improving the issues highlighted in this report. Their feedback and contributions to this report, and to the Akron/Summit County community, are much appreciated.

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## For More Information

Interested in learning more about these issues, or finding out where the information in this report came from? Visit the following sources to begin your journey:

- **Data from the American Community Survey, U.S. Census.** Accessible online at <http://factfinder2.census.gov>
- **Human Services County Profiles, The Center for Community Solutions.** Accessible online at [www.communitysolutions.com/county-profiles](http://www.communitysolutions.com/county-profiles)
- **Ohio Means Jobs.** Accessible online at [www.ohiomeansjobs.com](http://www.ohiomeansjobs.com)
- **Early Learning and Development County Profiles, Early Childhood Ohio.** Accessible online at [www.earlychildhoodohio.org/county\\_profiles.php](http://www.earlychildhoodohio.org/county_profiles.php)
- **Hunger in America 2014: State Report for Ohio, Feeding America.** Accessible online at [www.admin.ohiofoodbanks.org/uploads/news/final\\_state\\_report.pdf](http://www.admin.ohiofoodbanks.org/uploads/news/final_state_report.pdf)
- **Map the Meal Gap, Feeding America.** Accessible online at [www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/map-the-meal-gap/](http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/map-the-meal-gap/)
- **Tomer, Adie. (2012) The Brookings Institution, "Where the Jobs Are: Employer Access to Labor by Transit."** Accessible online at [www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2012/07/11-transit-jobs-tomer](http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2012/07/11-transit-jobs-tomer)
- **Data and research from the Scripps Gerontology Center at Miami University.** Accessible online at [www.miamioh.edu/cas/academics/centers/scripps/](http://www.miamioh.edu/cas/academics/centers/scripps/)
- **Honeck, Jon and Matt Bird. (2014) The Center for Community Solutions, "Aging Ohio: The Impact of Demographic Change on State Fiscal Policy."** Accessible online at [www.communitysolutions.com/assets/docs/Major\\_Reports/Other\\_Publications/2014\\_ccs\\_crossroads\\_aging\\_final\\_102214.pdf](http://www.communitysolutions.com/assets/docs/Major_Reports/Other_Publications/2014_ccs_crossroads_aging_final_102214.pdf)

Akron Community Foundation embraces and enhances the work of charitable people who make a permanent commitment to the good of the community. In 1955, a \$1 million bequest from the estate of Edwin Shaw established the community foundation. Today, it is a philanthropic endowment of nearly \$200 million with a growing family of funds established by charitable people from all walks of life.



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