



Toledo Community Foundation

Assessing Community Needs

City of Toledo and
Lucas County, Ohio

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W.E. UPJOHN
INSTITUTE
FOR EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH

Community Challenges

Toledo Community Foundation
Assessing Community Needs

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The Toledo Community Foundation engaged the Upjohn Institute to assess the critical needs of the City of Toledo and Lucas County, in relation to the foundation's grantmaking priorities of education and literacy, social services, physical and mental health, neighborhood and urban affairs, natural resources, and arts and culture. This assessment aims to provide a deeper understanding of major areas of concern for the community that the Foundation can address through its grants and partnerships.

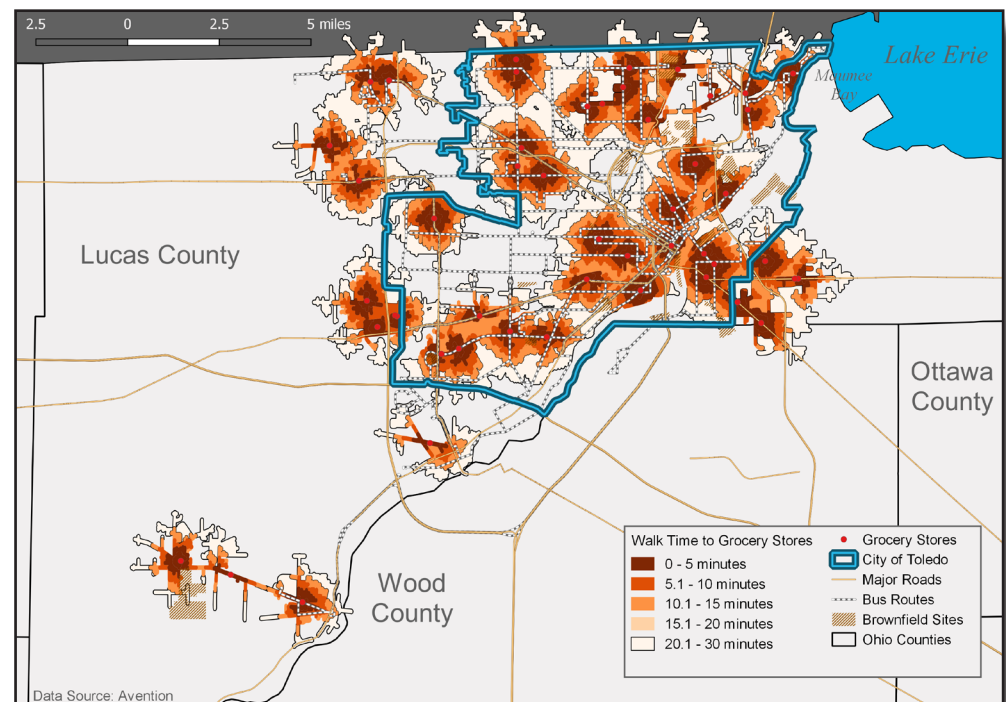


A core issue for Lucas County is poverty. In Toledo, poverty and its outcomes are concentrated in the urban core. Within the city, you find lower household income, higher unemployment, lower labor force participation, higher levels of those without a high school degree, and lower levels of those who haven't finished college—most notably, in the urban core.

Many people have difficulty accessing transportation, limiting their access to jobs, child care, and a healthy lifestyle, including efficient access to both healthy food and health care. The lack of frequent, around-the-clock public transit limits access to destinations; those in Toledo may face long walks while those outside the city may find themselves bearing the costs of vehicle ownership or depending on others for rides. This reduced access to destinations compounds eco-

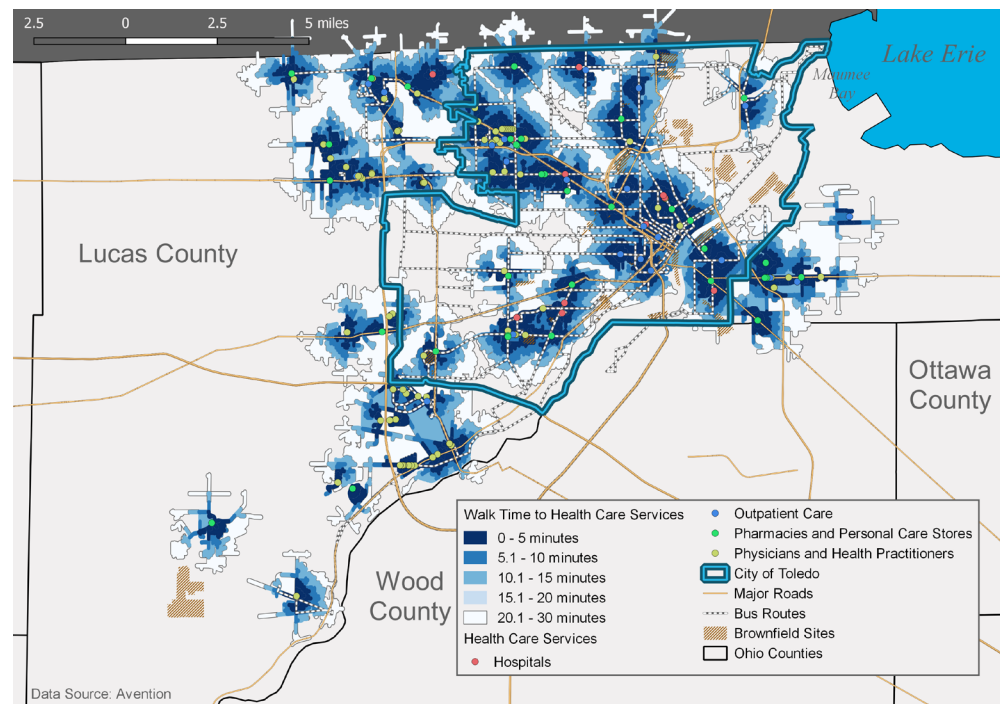


WALK TIME TO GROCERY STORES



Changing these conditions may help future generations to emerge from poverty.

WALK TIME TO HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS



conomic disadvantage, particularly for families with young children, senior citizens, and people with disabilities.

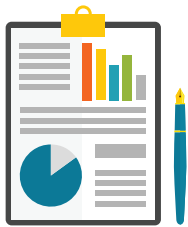
For the youngest in the county, there are concerns about the readiness of children to enter kindergarten. Lack of kindergarten preparedness leads to concerns of the quality of early childhood education. Access to health care, healthy food, a clean environment without lead contamination, and other factors all affect a child's educational performance. While solving these issues now won't immediately change the statistics on poverty, changing these conditions will help future generations to emerge from poverty.



Senior citizens are also affected by poverty. Fixed incomes and low incomes, often with only cost-of-living adjustments based on the Consumer Price Index, may not keep up with actual cost of living within the local economy. Also, as seniors try to "age in place" they increasingly experience loneliness and isolation as they become more homebound. Mobility becomes limited for those in later stages of life – by both physical and structural issues – increasing the importance of senior-specific care services and access to reliable transportation.

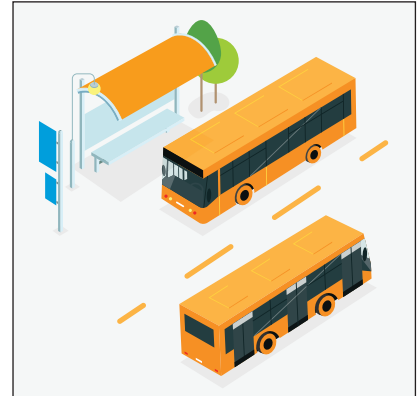
In the middle are those affected by barriers to entry to jobs, including barriers such as access to reliable transportation and child care. Many households in the study area have fewer vehicles than workers and experience unreliable "for-hire" transportation services. Public transit routes cross the city broadly, but few

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extend beyond the city. Budget restraints limit transit frequency, especially on nights and Sundays, and the system is not compatible with some commutes and other trips. Limited and lack of access to transportation is also a barrier to accessing safe and reliable child care.

Exacerbating these problems is a perceived lack of services, including for the LGBTQ, ethnic, veteran, those in poverty, the working poor, and immigrant communities. There is a lack of sensitivity and understanding when providing services to these communities. There is also a significant need for training to understand the impacts of culture, orientation, economics, and other factors when assisting clients, constituents, families, and students. This includes training on how to help those impacted by the opioid crisis in Lucas County.



RESEARCH APPROACH

The Upjohn Team's research approach to the study included data analysis; a review of plans and studies focused on Lucas County and the City of Toledo over the past 5 years; focus group conversations with community representatives; interviews with key community stakeholders; and interviews with Toledo Community Foundation staff.

Data Analysis. Data were collected from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Avention, and Infutor Data Solutions to analyze the socioeconomic conditions of the City of Toledo and Lucas County.

Plan Review. Documents, plans, and studies were reviewed to understand prior community discussions and priorities identified over the past 5 years. These documents were examined to identify connectivity between the Foundation's six grantmaking priority areas and ongoing community efforts.

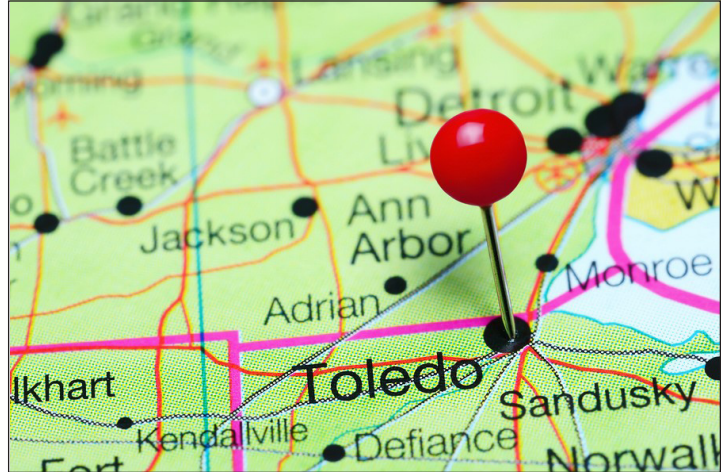
Community Conversations. Six focus groups were facilitated for each of the Foundation's grantmaking priorities with community representatives throughout Lucas County. A total of 79 stakeholders participated in the focus groups.

Stakeholder Interviews. A total of 15 telephone interviews were conducted with key thought leaders across Lucas County, those with in-depth knowledge of the Toledo region's most pressing challenges and how these challenges have changed over time.

Staff Interviews. In-person interviews were conducted with Foundation key staff members to get their thoughts on the Foundation's vision or strategy to grantmaking, of efforts already occurring in the region, and on how the Foundation could assist in addressing challenges identified by the community.

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Other places across the nation share some of the challenges the Toledo region faces. As with these other communities, with the right leadership, commitment, and collaborative heart, Toledo can make strides in tackling these issues and improving its economic situation.



There are significant resources in Lucas County to begin to address many of the issues discussed in this study; however, better organization of these resources, including the coordination of activities, sharing of information and resources, and collaboration among agency service providers, is at the forefront of how to be more effective.

Developing a shared vision with support agencies, institutions, and communities would help to better align and focus strategies to address the issues. Regular meetings among providers, from large to small and with equal voice, would help to reduce duplication and increase collaboration. Such meetings could be facilitated by an organized and structured system, where information is shared to the benefit of all stakeholders.

Shared services among some organizations would prove useful in creating efficiencies and enhancing effectiveness. The process of applying for grants, and then managing the data necessary for evaluations and reporting, is often difficult, particularly for smaller organizations. A shared services or back office, that includes clerical, accounting, and payroll assistance, would help organizations apply for grants and better assist with service delivery.

Finally, Lucas County agencies and organizations see the need for a change in how grants can be used: first, to help with sustaining operations and second, to expand the types of things that can be funded, such as the ability to access “emergency” grants for unexpected expenses such as technology or heating failures.

There is a significant need to help alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in Lucas County, but more specifically in the City of Toledo. The causes and consequences affect all aspects of the population, but intervention in Pre-K and early childhood education can do more than alleviate current conditions: it can change the conditions of the region. While there are many resources targeted to many of the causes and consequences across Lucas County, better coordination of physical, financial, information, and human capital is believed to be the key to changing the trajectory for the region.

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The Toledo Community Foundation cannot solve all of these challenges as a single entity. The Foundation must partner across the city and the county with private, public, and not-for-profit entities to combine missions and resources to meet the needs of the community.

To best use the assets of the Foundation, the needs voiced by the community and the projects and programs proposed in the Foundation's new strategic plan should be viewed and resourced using one of three lenses:



1 Should the Foundation **OWN** it?

In this lens, the Foundation would be actively engaged in project work, including oversight. Work in this area, with direct or directed funding from the Foundation, would be essential to its mission and identified as a priority within the goals of the strategic plan.



2 Should the Foundation **SUPPORT** it?

In this lens, the program activities and work would be owned by another entity but would receive Foundation support, including financial support and/or staff, in-kind, and other types of support, to achieve the mission and goals as defined in the strategic plan.



3 Should the Foundation **ENDORSE** it?

In this lens, the Foundation would lend support with no or minimal financial support, but may supply letters of support, limited staff, or limited in-kind and other types of support. In most cases, endorsing such work would be in areas considered important by Foundation leadership, but not directly part of its mission or as it pertains to one of the goals of the strategic plan.

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