

2013



# KALAMAZOO COUNTY COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2013

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the Kalamazoo County Community Action Agency

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## Introduction

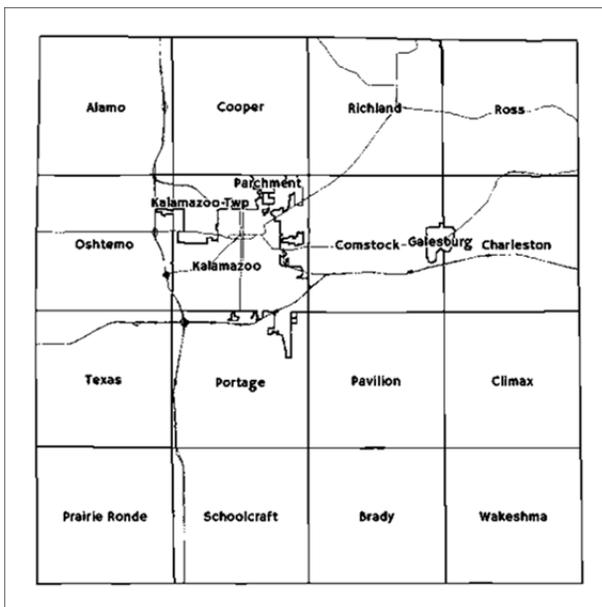
### Kalamazoo County, Michigan

Kalamazoo County is home to an estimated 254,580 residents. Kalamazoo County sits adjacent to Allegan County, Barry County, Calhoun County, Branch County, Cass County, St. Joseph County, and Van Buren County and has a total area of 580.18 square miles. Kalamazoo County is accessible via highways US-131 and interstate I-94 and has air service from the Kalamazoo/Battle Creek International Airport.

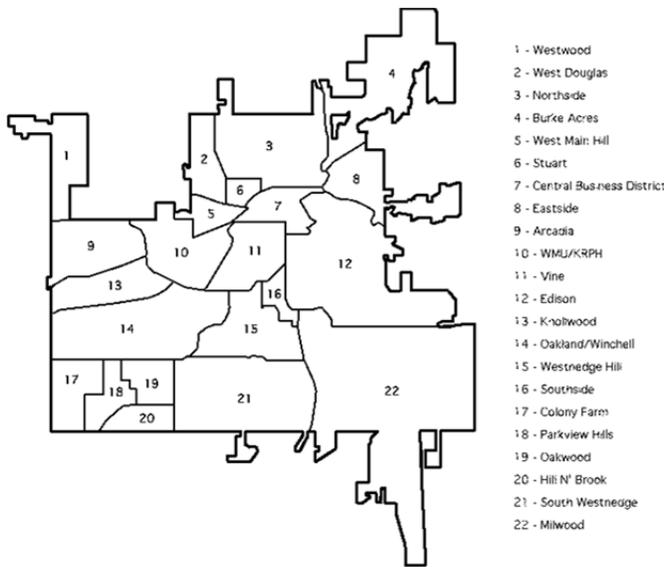
Kalamazoo County's employment ranks better than the state averages. The Median Family Income in Kalamazoo County as of 2013 is \$62,300 and \$60,900 for the state, according to the HUD data and estimation. The unemployment rate in 2012 was 7% in Kalamazoo County and 9.1% in Michigan.



According to the 2011 U.S. Census data, demographically, 200,147 (79.4%) of Kalamazoo County residents identify as White, 27,476 (10.9%) identify as Black or African American, 5,041 (2.0%) as Asian, and 10,335 (4.0%) as Hispanic or Latino.



The City of Kalamazoo, the largest city in Kalamazoo County, houses 74,743 residents. It is divided into 22 neighborhoods. Kalamazoo city residents are diverse, with 47,686 (63.8%) of residents identifying as white or Caucasian, 17,116 (22.9%) as Black or African American, 2,018 (2.7%) as Asian, 4,784 (6.4%) as Hispanic or Latino. The median family income in



Kalamazoo city is \$41,773 and the unemployment rate in 2011 was 7.3%.

Portage is the second largest city in Kalamazoo County. Portage has a population of 46,624; 87% of the residents identify as White, 5% as Black or African American, 4% as Asian, and 3% as Hispanic or Latino. The estimated median family income of Portage in 2011 was \$71,499. Portage had a 9.2% unemployment rate in 2011.

### ***Education***

One of the unique features of Kalamazoo is the Kalamazoo Promise. The Promise gives a full college tuition waiver to all students who attend Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS) from kindergarten through high school, live within the district boundaries, and meet all other gift requirements. The Kalamazoo Promise also gives partial tuition waivers to those that moved to the area and attended for fewer years, with partial waiver ranging from 95% to 65%, based on the number of years one attended KPS. Kalamazoo County houses five institutions of higher education. Western Michigan University is a large public university with approximately 25,000 students. Kalamazoo College, a small liberal arts institution, has 1,400 students. Kalamazoo Valley Community College offers two-year degrees and certificates and has over 11,000 attendees. Kalamazoo is also home to Davenport University, a business and management school.

### ***Economic Opportunity and Income Stability***

The manufacturing and health science industries are important to the economic state of Kalamazoo County. The county is home to such corporations as Stryker, Pfizer, FEMA Corporation, Landscape Forms, and Kalamazoo Outdoor Gourmet.

### ***Health***

Kalamazoo ranks 46<sup>th</sup> out of 82 Michigan counties for positive health outcomes. Of the county's rankings, decreasing risky behaviors affecting one's health (e.g., smoking, inactivity, and sexually transmitted diseases) was the most positive, positioning Kalamazoo County as 10<sup>th</sup> in the state. Kalamazoo scored the lowest in morbidity, or overall county health, and the physical environment which measures factors such as drinking water safety and access to recreational facilities. Kalamazoo County has many healthcare services available and features both Bronson Methodist and Borgess Hospitals. With the addition of a Medical School at Western Michigan University, it is likely that the health sector of employment and research will continue to grow in

the county, and more qualified doctors will be available to help meet preventative and urgent health care needs.

The city of Kalamazoo has four Farmers' Markets that feature seasonal fresh produce. These markets are the Kalamazoo Farmers' Market on Bank Street, People's Food Co-op, Douglass Farmers' Market, and the Kalamazoo-4<sup>th</sup> Friday Farmers' Market.

### ***Community Infrastructure / Transportation***

The City of Kalamazoo Community Development Division invests federal, state and local funds in programs and services that benefit targeted neighborhoods and low-income households. These programs and services include partnerships with local nonprofit organizations and the distribution of CDBG funds for infrastructure improvements.

The Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority features services such as fixed route bus service, Metro County Connect which supplies door to door transportation on demand for those needing extra assistance, and the Community Service Van which allows nonprofit organizations to utilize available service vans.

The City of Kalamazoo and the Kalamazoo County Land Bank Authority were awarded a demolition grant to eliminate 83 blighted residential and commercial structures within the city. The goal of the grant is to mitigate ill effects of blight and property abandonment and stabilize property values in key areas.

## PART I – Secondary Data

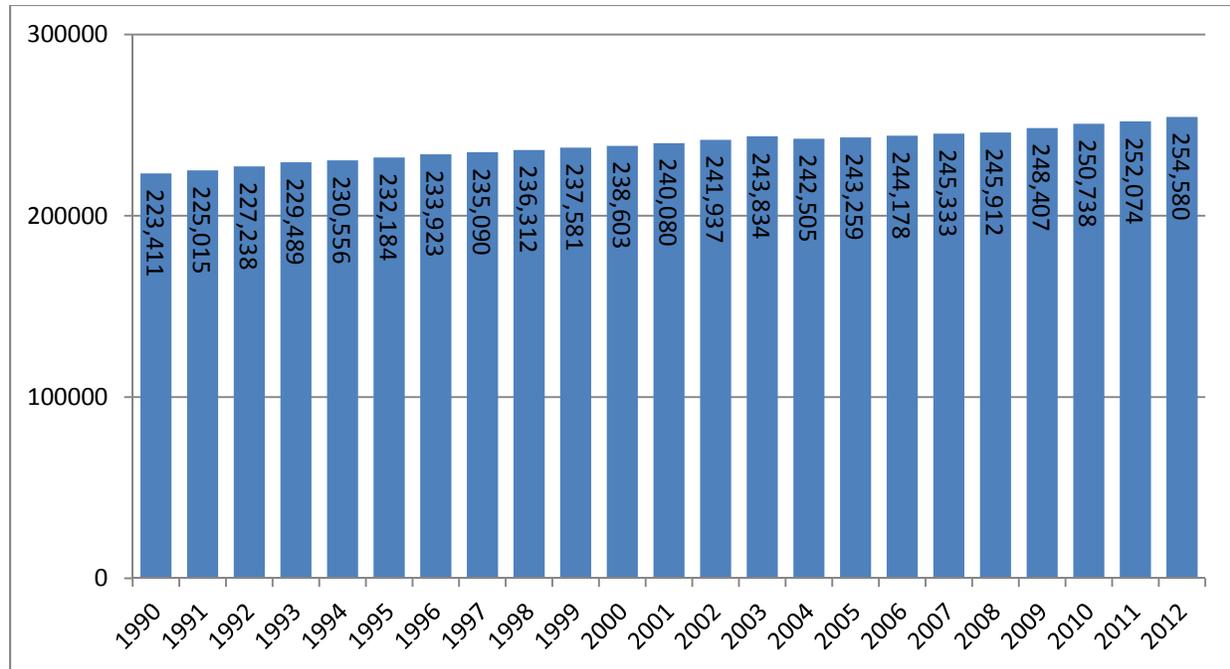
### A. General Demographics

#### Population Trends

With all communities, the residents that live within and make up the community tend to change over time. These changes in the characteristics of a population can result from two major components: 1) the natural ebbs and flows that come from births and deaths of residents who make up the community; and 2) the migration of people into and out of the community. To examine the population trends occurring in the community that makes up Kalamazoo County geographical area, we examine the overall population level and the birth, death, and migration rates of Kalamazoo County over the past couple of decades. Following that, we will review the demographic make-up of Kalamazoo County and how it has evolved over time.

Over time, Kalamazoo County has seen a small but steady increase in the overall size of its population, with year-over-year gains ranging from 0.006% to 0.01% (see Figure 1). Cumulatively, however, the county population size grew between 1990 and 2012 by 31,169 residents for a total gain of nearly 14% over 22 years.

Figure 1. Population Trends in Kalamazoo County 1990-2012

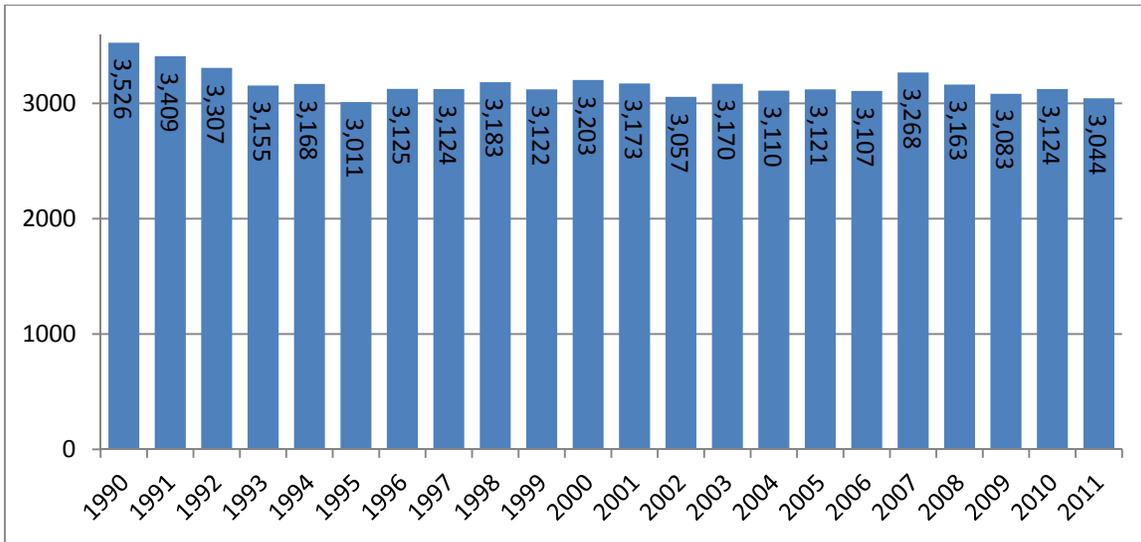


Source: U.S. Census (Note: 2001-2006 and 1991-1999 taken from archived “vintage” population estimates)

Examination of the birth and death rates reveal the extent to which this growth resulted from natural patterns. Birth rates in Kalamazoo County have been on the decline over the past two decades. In 1990, there were 3,526 births in the county and by 2011 this number had

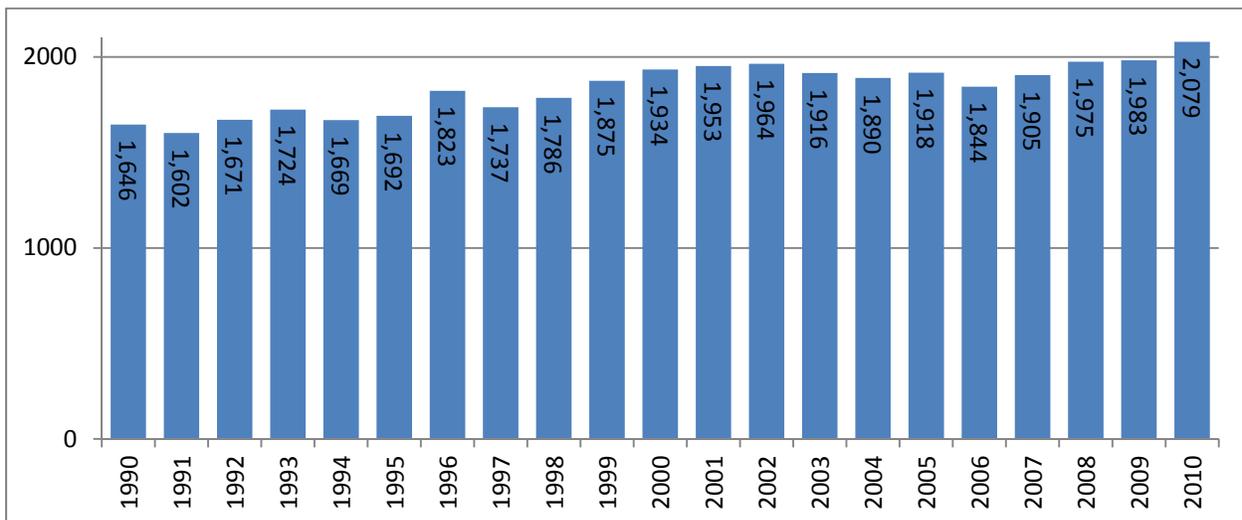
reduced to 3,044 births. Relative to the total population per year, in 1990 there were 15.8 births per 1000 people; by 2000, the relative birth rate reduced to 13.1 per 1000 people, and by 2011—the last year for which records were available—the birth rate was 12.1 per 1000 people. The number of overall deaths in Kalamazoo County climbed over time; in 1990 there were 1,646 deaths and this number climbed to 2,079 by 2010, the last year for which data were available. However, relative to the total population in Kalamazoo County, the death rates were more stable across time, nudging only slightly higher over the 22 year period. Specifically, in 1990 the death rate was 7.4 per 1000 people; by 2000 the death rate increased to 8.1 per 1000 people, and climbed slightly higher to 8.3 per 1000 in 2010.

Figure 2. Birth Trends in Kalamazoo County 1990-2011



Source: Michigan Department of Community Health, Vital Records Index, Kalamazoo County Human Services Department

Figure 3. Death Trends in Kalamazoo County 1990-2010

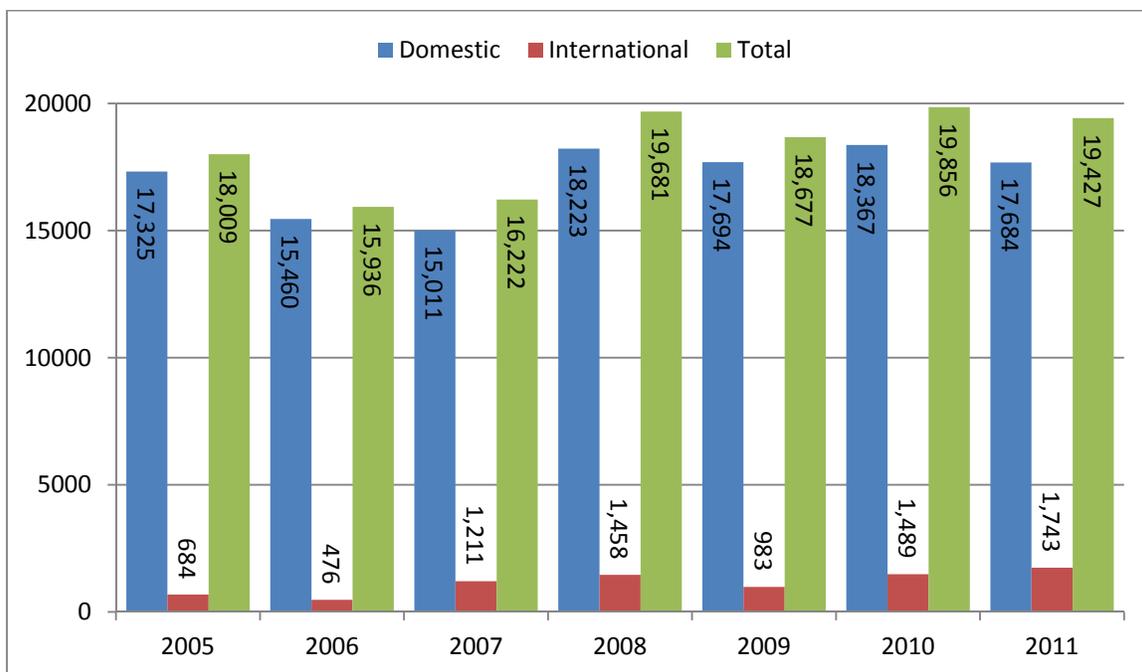


Source: Michigan Department of Community Health, Vital Records Index

Examination of the migration levels in Kalamazoo County reveals the extent to which this growth resulted from the movement of people into and out of the county. The U.S. Census keeps count records at the county level on people who reported moving and makes this data available for native born people and foreign born people. This provides an estimate of the volume of movement occurring into and out of Kalamazoo County, and determines the extent to which this migration stems from domestic and international movements of people. The total volume of migration in the county has increased since 2005 (the earliest years for which records were still available). In 2005, there were 18,009 people who moved in or out of the county, and by 2011 (the last year for which records were available), the raw numbers climbed to 19,427 people. This increase in the volume of migration into and out of the county was likely the result of the economic recession, which drove more people to look further afield from their current area to find work. For instance, in rates relative to the total county population, 7.4% of the people in the county reported migrating in 2005, and this rate peaked at 8.0% in 2008 during the height of the economic recession, and it remained at nearly that level in 2010 (7.9%) and 2011 (7.7%).

Another interesting trend in the migration data is the acceleration of international migration in Kalamazoo County. The total number of foreign born people migrating into the county nearly tripled between 2005 and 2011, climbing from 684 to 1,743 during that time period. As a percent of the total volume of migration, international migration of foreign born people accounted for 3.8% of all migration occurring in Kalamazoo County in 2005 and climbed to 9.0% of all migration in 2011. This pattern of international migration suggests that an accelerated change in the cultural groups that make up Kalamazoo County, may be underway.

Figure 4. Migration Trends in Kalamazoo County 2000-2011



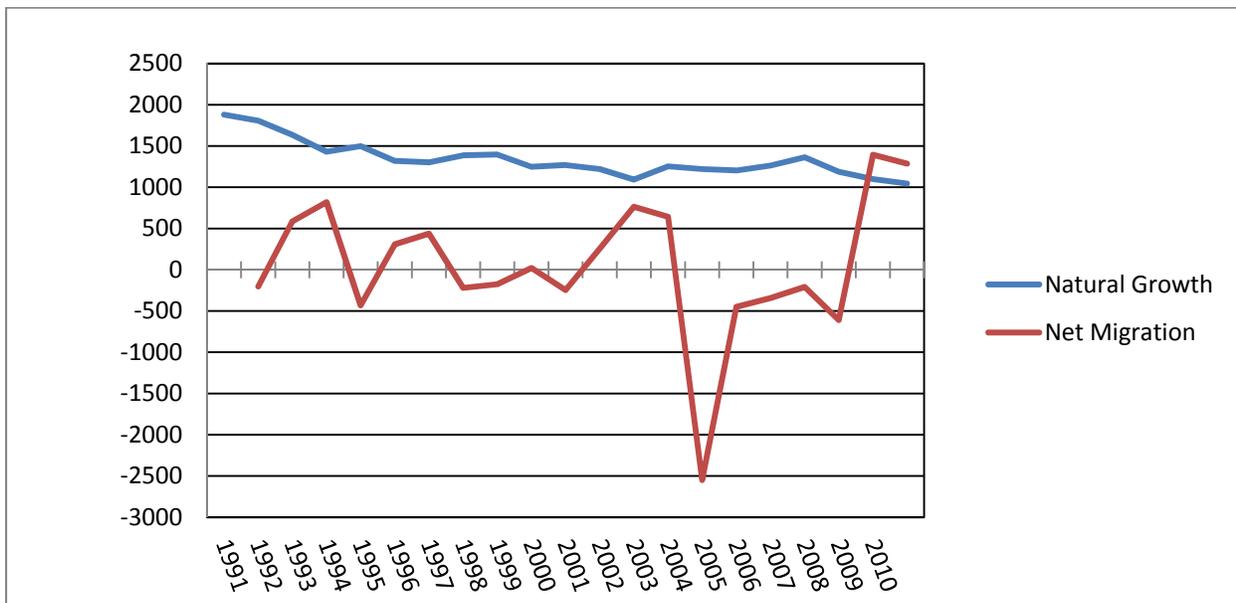
Source: U.S. Census (S0701 1 yr)

While volume of migration is useful to gain a sense of the total numbers and portion of a population that are transient, to determine the extent to which natural growth and migration

contribute to the change of a population, additional indicators need to be calculated from these data. Figure 5 below depicts these trends, using births minus deaths to indicate the natural growth levels, and year-over-year total population gain numbers minus natural growth to indicate the net migration pattern for the county. Natural population growth gradually declined in the county from a high in 1990, when a net 1,880 people were added to the population. This steady decline continued un-interrupted from 1990 to 2002, when a net 1,093 people were added to the population. Natural growth levels rebounded to some extent between 2003 and 2007, when a new peak of 1,363 net people were added to the population in 2007. From 2007 to 2010 the natural growth levels began to decline again, reaching their lowest point over the past several decades, when only a net of 1,045 people were added to the population in 2010. In total, the annual natural growth levels in Kalamazoo County declined by 56% between 1990 and 2010.

With respect to net migration, positive numbers represent in-immigration into the county and negative numbers represent out-migration leaving the county. From 1991 to 2003, the annual net migration oscillated between adding or subtracting from the total population gains. These oscillations were greater in the years between 1991 and 1997; however the cumulative effect was positive in-migration during this time period. From 1998 to 2001 the net migration rates were fairly level and cumulatively resulted in a small amount of out-migration from the county during this time period. In 2002 and 2003 there was once again a climb in annual net migration adding the total annual population levels of the county. However, in 2004 the two year trend toward in-migration into the county shifted sharply and abruptly to a pattern of out-migration, when a net of 2,549 people moved out of the county. From 2004 to 2008, when the local and national economic recession were beginning to set in, this trend toward annual net out-migration continued. In 2009 and 2010, the annual net migration level had once again swung back into a pattern of in-migration, with an accumulation of 2,681 net people moving into the county during this two year period.

Figure 5. Natural Growth & Net Migration Trends in Kalamazoo County 1991-2010



In addition to population trends over time a review of the demographic make-up of Kalamazoo County and how it evolved over time will also provide important context for better understanding the needs of residents living in Kalamazoo County. For instance, the new birth counts mentioned above involve mothers and infants, and these child/parent dyads have unique socio-economic resources, health habits, and health statuses that converge to impact well-being. For instance, mothers without a high school diploma may have limited ability to earn income, or limited experience to draw upon to help their children in school. Likewise, mothers who smoke during pregnancy are more likely to get sick, as are their children. And children with low birth weights are more likely to get sick and require additional attention and resources from their parents and extended network of care givers. Examining the changes in these characteristics of the child/parent dyad over time provides an important assessment of the changing health, material, and well-being needs in Kalamazoo County. In Table 1 below these trends are depicted from the years 2000 to 2011.

**Table 1. Birth Characteristics of Kalamazoo County Mothers and Children 2000-2011**

	Mother Characteristics			Child Characteristics
	Less than High School	Unmarried	Smoked during Pregnancy	Low Birth Weight
2000	14.6%	35.1%	18.5%	7.5%
2001	13.6%	34.7%	17.3%	7.8%
2002	13.7%	35.1%	16.9%	7.8%
2003	13.9%	36.0%	16.9%	8.2%
2004	14.8%	36.6%	17.3%	8.2%
2005	14.5%	37.7%	17.4%	8.8%
2006	14.4%	38.0%	17.2%	8.6%
2007	13.7%	39.3%	17.1%	8.5%
2008	NA	39.8%	NA	8.1%
2009	13.2%	40.9%	19.0%	8.3%
2010	13.2%	41.5%	18.5%	8.3%
2011	12.0%	42.0%	17.3%	8.1%

Source: Kids Count Data Center (data provided by Michigan League for Public Policy)

The portion of mothers in Kalamazoo County without a high school level of educational attainment declined from 2000 to 2011. More specifically, from 2000 to 2007, the portion of mothers in the county with less than a high school diploma fluctuated between 14.8% and 13.6%. From 2009 to 2011, these rates of mothers without a high school diploma dropped steadily each year, from 13.2% in 2009 down to 12.0% in 2011. While this trend suggests a modest strengthening in the socio-economic capital of young mothers and the children for whom they care, the unmarried status rate of young mothers in Kalamazoo County suggest that the traditional means of providing social and monetary support for young mothers may be eroding with time. In 2000, unmarried mothers made up 35.1% of all mothers in the county, and over the years this rate climbed slowly yet steadily to 42.0% in 2011. Next, smoking is a health behavior that contributes to the greatest number of preventable deaths and disease in the U.S., and is associated with poorer health outcomes for young children via second hand smoke. Thus maternal smoking can serve as a strong macro-level indicator of likely health care needs and expenses for Kalamazoo County. The portion of mothers in Kalamazoo County who smoked in

2000 was 18.5%; this rate subsequently declined in 2001 and remained relatively stable between 16.9% and 17.4% in subsequent years up to 2007. In 2009 and 2010 the rate once again increased up to 19.0%, before declining to 17.3% again in 2011, the last year for which data were available. Lastly, low birth weights serve as an early indicator of a child’s health status and likelihood of elevated and pro-longed health care needs to promote or restore well-being. Overall rates of low birth weight in the county are higher in 2011 than they were a decade earlier, with roughly one in 13 newborns having a low birth rate, putting them at risk for short term and sustained poor health outcomes. Although the 2011 rate is rather high, it is down somewhat following a peak of just under 9.0% between 2005 and 2007.

## Race and Ethnicity

The growth in the population of Kalamazoo County over time has also varied across ethnic and racial groups over time (see Table 2). The growth rate for Hispanics in Kalamazoo has been consistently high from 1990 to 2010. Between 1990 and 2000 the number of Hispanics in the county grew by 59.8%, and between 2000 and 2010, this number grew again by 57.8%. Cumulatively from 1990 to 2010, the number of Hispanic residents living in Kalamazoo County grew to more than 2.5 times the number present in 1990. Growth for Asian Americans in the county has also occurred, although this trend appears to be decelerating. Between 1990 and 2000 the number of Asian Americans in the county climbed by 39.0%, but the numbers increased by a slower rate of 19.4% between 2000 and 2010. Cumulatively, the number of Asian Americans in the county is 66.0% higher in 2010 than it was in 1990. Growth in the numbers of Black or African American residents has also occurred, although at a steady and much more modest pace of 16.8% between 1990 and 2000, and of 16.1% between 2000 and 2010. Interestingly, the rate of growth for people of two or more races has also been on the rise. Although the Census data did not ask about multiple race options until 2000, the number of people in Kalamazoo County reporting that they are from multiple racial/ethnic backgrounds has grown by 62.5% between 2000 and 2010. Growth in the White population in Kalamazoo County remained relatively flat over the past 20 years, while the share of minority groups grew. In 1990, Whites made up nearly 88% of the county; by 2010, that number reduced to less than 80%. Overall, this pattern of results illustrates that the racial, ethnic, and cultural background of the residents of Kalamazoo County are shifting and that the county is becoming increasingly diverse.

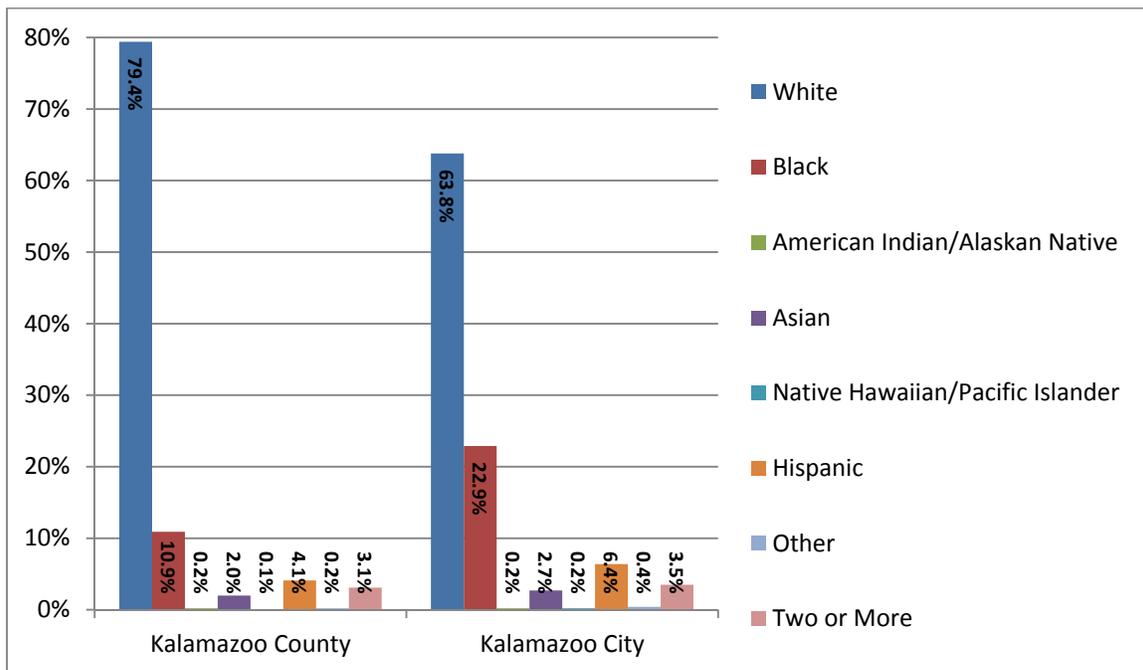
**Table 2. Population by Race/Ethnicity for Kalamazoo County, 1990-2010**

	1990	2000	2010	1990-2000 Change		2000-2010 Change	
				Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Population	223411	238603	250331	15192	6.8%	11728	4.9%
Total Hispanics	3950	6311	9959	2361	59.8%	3648	57.8%
White	195481	199180	200047	3699	1.9%	867	0.4%
Black	19668	22968	26677	3300	16.8%	3709	16.1%
American Indian/Eskimo	953	892	923	-61	-6.4%	31	3.5%
Asian	3124	4343	5186	1219	39.0%	843	19.4%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	-	72	73	-	-	1	1.4%
Other	235	476	381	241	102.6%	-95	-20.0%
Two or More Races	-	4361	7085	-	-	2724	62.5%

Source: U.S. Census DP-1, 1990&2000 via CensusScope.org

In 2011, Whites made up 79% of the population, with Blacks making up 11%, and Hispanics making up just over 4% of Kalamazoo County. However, this racial composition is not evenly distributed across the county. In the City of Kalamazoo, Whites make up less than 64% of the residents, whereas Blacks make up nearly 23%, and Hispanics make up over 6%. Put another way, the portion of residents who are Black is more than twice as large in the City of Kalamazoo as it is in county-wide, and the portion of Hispanic residents in the city is 50% greater than the portion of Hispanic residents county-wide. Thus, the minorities of the county are disproportionately concentrated in the city.

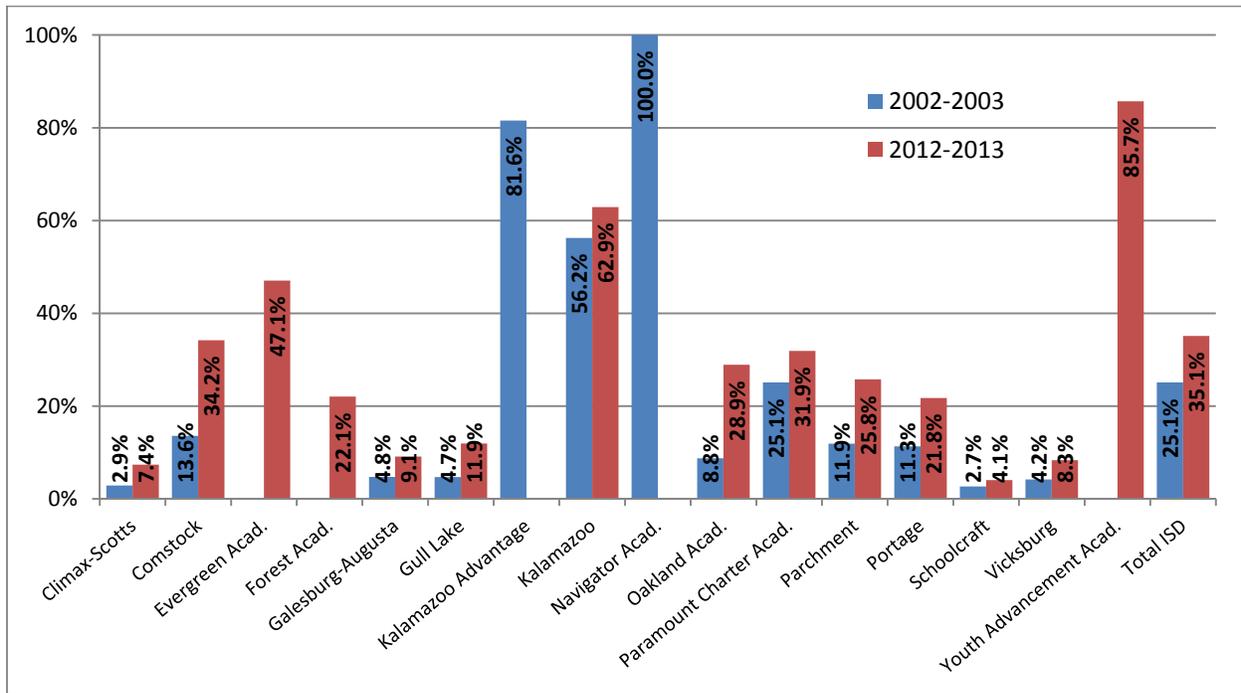
Figure 6. Race/Ethnicity for Kalamazoo County and City



Source: U.S. Census (DP05 20011 1 yr)

Other indicators of demographic shifts in the area include examining racial/ethnic makeup of the various school districts in Kalamazoo County. The figure below depicts the portion of students of color (non-white) in each school district, as well as a total for all the schools in the Intermediate School District (ISD) for the county. For all schools that have comparison data available, racial and ethnic minorities grew to be a larger portion of the local student body between 2002 and 2012. Overall, the highest numbers of minority students were in the Kalamazoo school district, yet the largest gains occurred for a number of other schools, such as Parchment, Portage, Schoolcraft, and Vicksburg, each of which had its portion of minority students more than double. However, the total gains for the county are perhaps best represented by the ISD, which covers the whole county and is unlikely to be skewed by minority gains in smaller school districts. Overall, the portion of minority students in the ISD grew from 25.1% in 2002 to 35.1% in 2012, which represents a growth rate of 40% for the decade and a total increase of 10%.

Figure 7. Students of Color by Kalamazoo County School Districts, 2002-2012

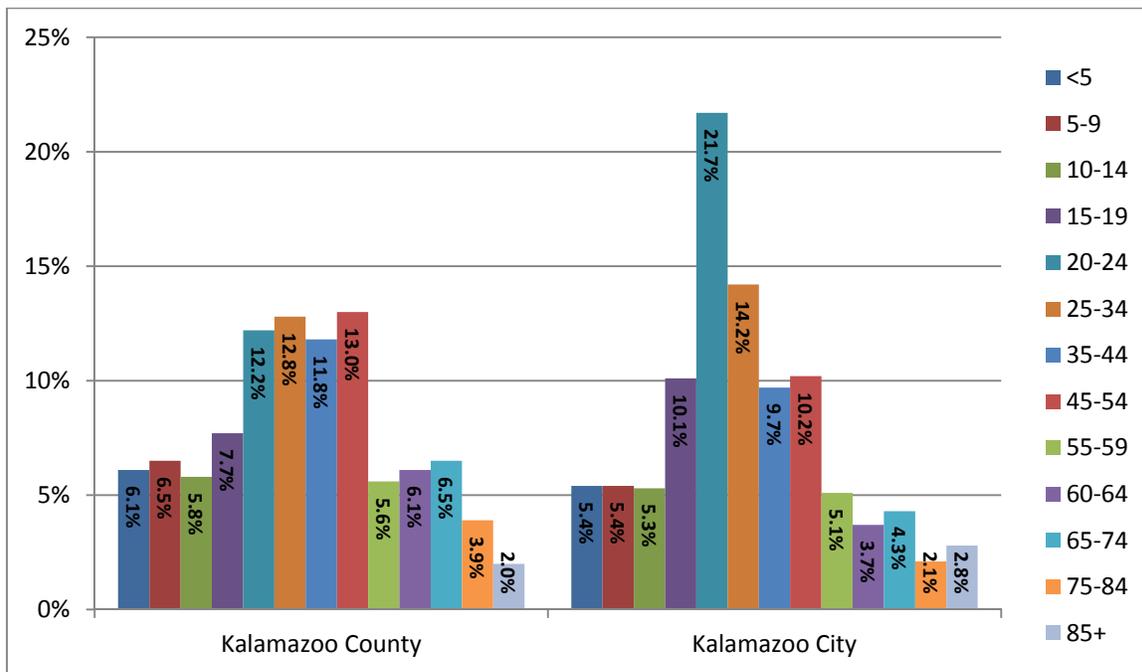


Source: Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI)

## Age

As far as age break down, which are depicted in Figure 8 below, the patterns were relatively similar between Kalamazoo County and Kalamazoo City. In 2011, in both the county and city, the largest age demographics were for people 20-54, which made up nearly half (49.8%) of the county residents and just over half (55.8%) of the city residents. The city did have a much higher proportion of people in the 20-24 age range, but this is likely due to the colleges and university located there. In both the county and the city, people aged 19 and younger made up 26% of the residents, with 6.1% and 5.4% (respectively) of the residents being five years of age or less. With respect to residents of retirement age (aged 65 and over), 12.4% of the county and 9.2% of the city fit that description.

Figure 8. Age Distribution of Population of Kalamazoo County and City



Source: U.S. Census (DP05 2011 1 yr)

## B. School Readiness and Educational Attainment

### Education and Gender

Education and gender are two major factors that impact individual earning, which corresponds with poverty, health, and well-being. Table 3 below depicts these relationships using 2011 inflation adjusted median earnings in 2011 for adults who are 25 years or over and who live in Kalamazoo County. These median incomes have been averaged across a three year time period to smooth the data; however the same patterns were present using just one year data. Higher educational attainment corresponds to increasingly higher incomes, overall, and this pattern hold true for both genders. Overall, those with less than a high school diploma earn only 70% of what those with a high school level education make; and those with only a high school level of education make 55% of the income that people with a bachelor's degree earn; and finally, those with a bachelor's degree earn 75% of what people with a graduate or professional degree earn in Kalamazoo County. Despite the gains in earnings that come with obtaining high levels of education, a gender gap persists across each levels of educational attainment, such that men constitutently earn higher incomes. Overall, women in Kalamazoo County earn 72% of the income that men in the county earn. Each of these trends is quite consistent with state and national data regarding the relationship of gender and education on earning potential.

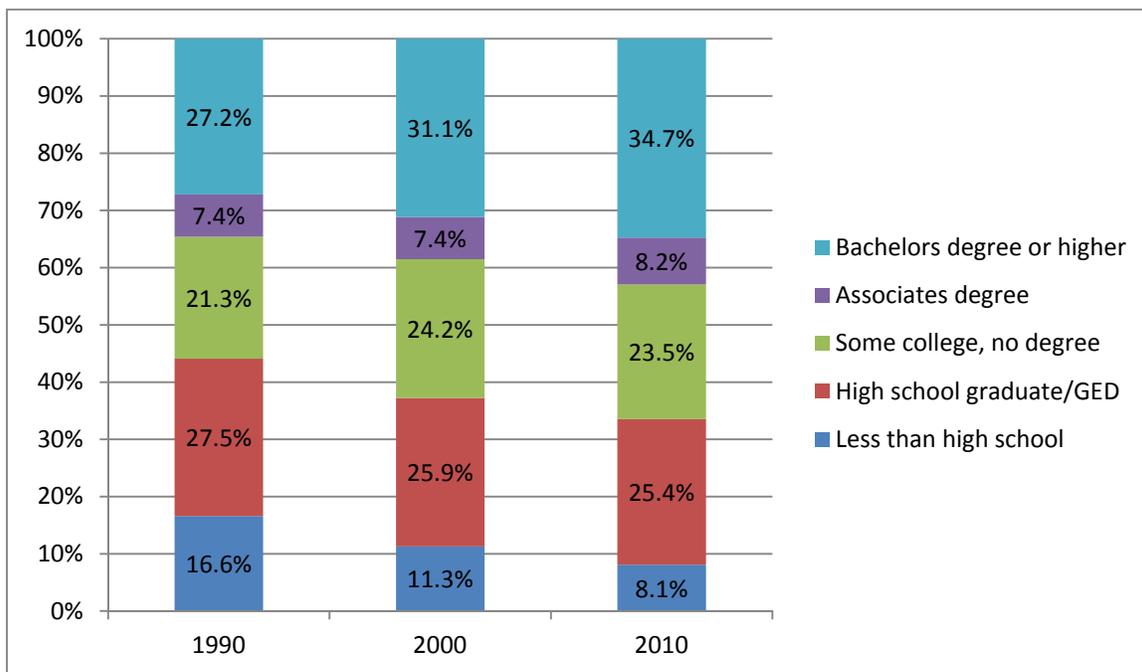
**Table 3. Median Annual Earnings in Kalamazoo County for Population 25 Years and Over, by Education and Gender**

	Total	< High School Graduate	High School Grad/ GED	Some College or Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree
Total	\$34,334	\$18,794	\$26,699	\$32,321	\$48,309	\$64,322
Male	\$40,514	\$21,840	\$31,730	\$40,248	\$59,459	\$80,917
Female	\$29,132	\$14,623	\$21,682	\$27,330	\$40,645	\$54,115
Ratio F:M	0.72	0.67	0.68	0.68	0.68	0.67

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey, 3 year average

From 1990 to 2010, the trend in Kalamazoo County has been toward higher levels of educational attainment. As depicted in Figure 9, in 1990, 27.2% of the county earned a bachelor's degree or higher. By 2000 this number had climbed to 31.1% and by 2010, 34.7% of all the adult residents in the county had earned a bachelor's degree or higher. The portion of people earning an associate's degree remained quite stable over this time period, and the portion attending some college but not earning a degree climbed by nearly three percentage points between 1990 and 2000, but leveled off to around 24% since the year 2000. The largest change in educational attainment occurred for those with a high school diploma or less. In 1990 44% of the county adult residents had earned a high school diploma or less; by 2000, this rate dropped to 37%, and by 2010 it had dropped to 33%. Most of this reduction in the portion of the county residents who have the lower levels of educational attainment, however, occurred for those with less than a high school level of education, which made up 16.6% of the adult county in 1990, 11.3% in 2000, and 8.1% in 2010.

**Figure 9. Educational Attainment for Kalamazoo County Residents 25 Years and Over, 1990-2010**

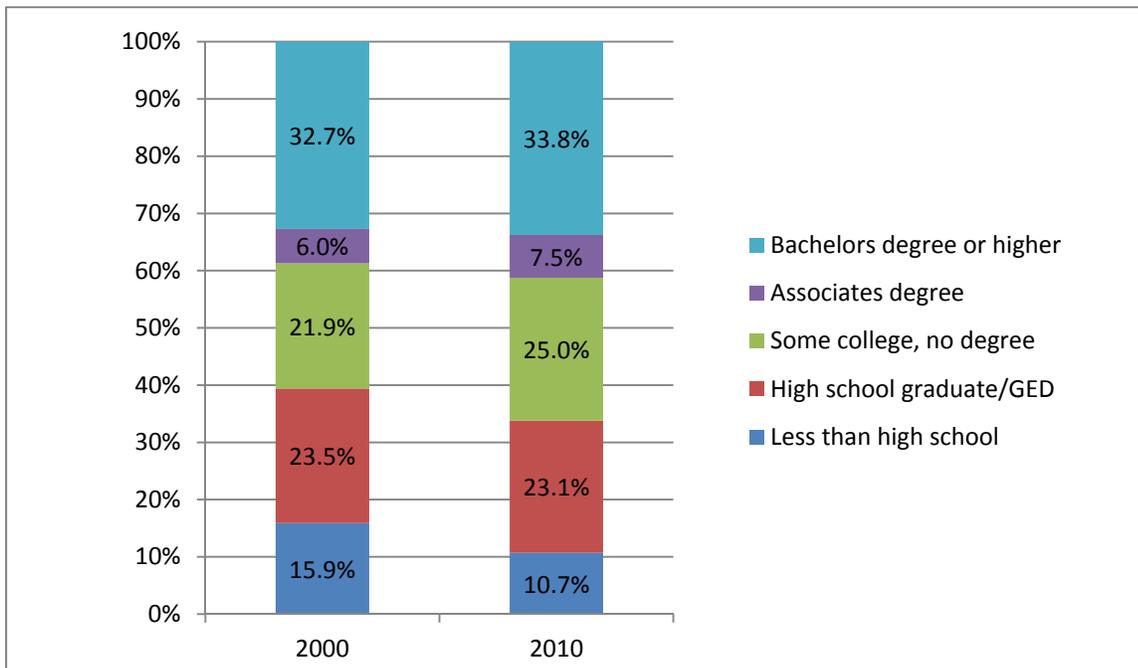


Source: U.S. Census, 1990 data through CensusScope.org

Data specifically for Kalamazoo City was also available from 2000 to 2010 (see Figure 10 below). Overall, the portion of adult residents (aged 25 years or more) who earned a bachelor’s degree or higher in the city remained fairly stable from 2000 (32.7%) to 2010 (33.8%). Those who earned an associate’s degree gained a percentage and a half between 2000 and 2010. The portion of the adult population in Kalamazoo City with some college education climbed from around 22% in 2000 to 25% in 2010. As was the case at the county level, the greatest changes in educational attainment in Kalamazoo City occurred at the lower end of educational attainment. The portion of people with a high school diploma or less fell from 39.4% in 2000 to 33.8% in 2000. While the portion of city residents earning a high school degree appeared to remain stable over time, the portion with less than a high school degree declined from 15.9% in 2000 to 10.7% in 2010. It is not clear entirely from this pattern of result the degree to which the Kalamazoo Promise impacted the educational attainment of city residents. In 2005 a new charitable program began called the Kalamazoo Promise which offered to pay in-state college tuition for all students of Kalamazoo public schools who earn a diploma. As these data refer to adults 25 years of age or older, and reflect only adults who choose to remain in the area, it is difficult to ascertain the level of impact the Kalamazoo Promise program had on educational attainment.

Overall, the educational attainment levels in both the county and city appear to be improving. However, this improvement is greatest for reducing the numbers who are obtaining the least amount of education. As economy moves increasingly away from well-paid low skill jobs and increasingly toward jobs that require more training and technical skill, higher levels of educational attainment and job/career training will be important in order for people to have access toward better incomes, job stability, and finding competitive jobs that provide health benefits.

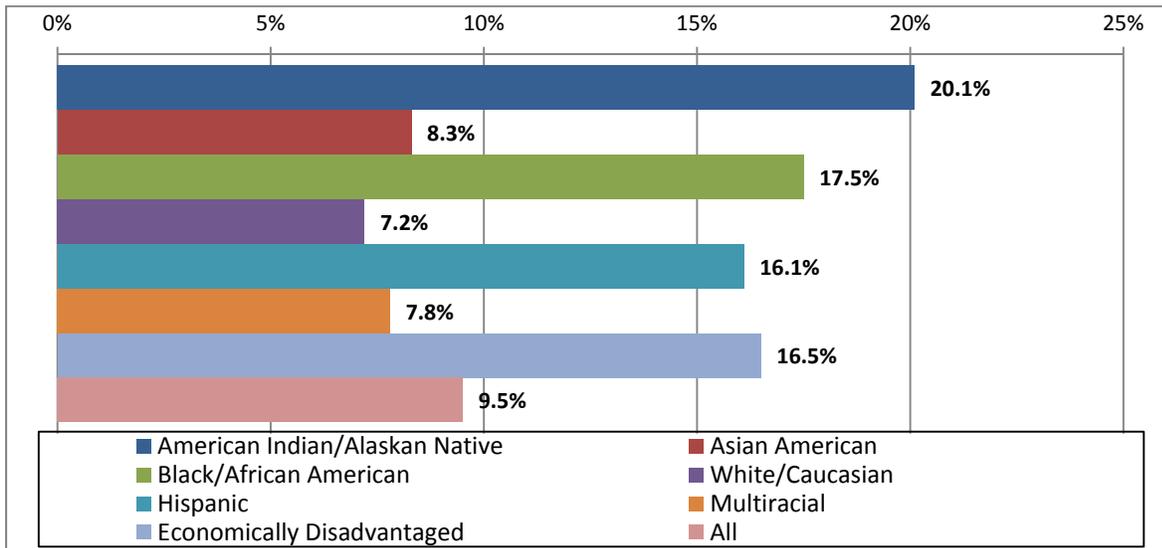
Figure 10. Educational Attainment for Kalamazoo City Residents 25 Years and Over, 2000-2010



Source: U.S. Census (2000 is 3 yr average, 2010 1 yr)

We next examine race, ethnicity, and economic disadvantage and how these factors correspond with disparities in educational attainment. The Michigan Department of Education defines economic disadvantage by a student’s federal eligibility for free or reduced lunch program offered through their local school system. Figure 11 depicts the overall 2012 high school dropout rate in Kalamazoo County, and Table 4 the dropout rate for each school. The overall dropout rate for the county is 9.5%. Whites have the lowest dropout rates (7.2%), with Asian Americans and Multi-racial students having slightly higher although statistically comparable dropout rates of 8.3% and 7.8%, respectively. However, dropout rates for all other racial/ethnic groups are considerably higher, with rates for Hispanics and African Americans at roughly 16% and 18%, respectively. At over 20%, the dropout rates are highest in Kalamazoo County for Native Americans, who, albeit, make up a relatively small portion of the county. Students who are economically disadvantaged also have elevated dropout rates (16.5%) relative to the total dropout rate (9.5%).

**Figure 11. Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Economic Status for Kalamazoo County High Schools**



Source: Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI), 2012 4-year cohort data

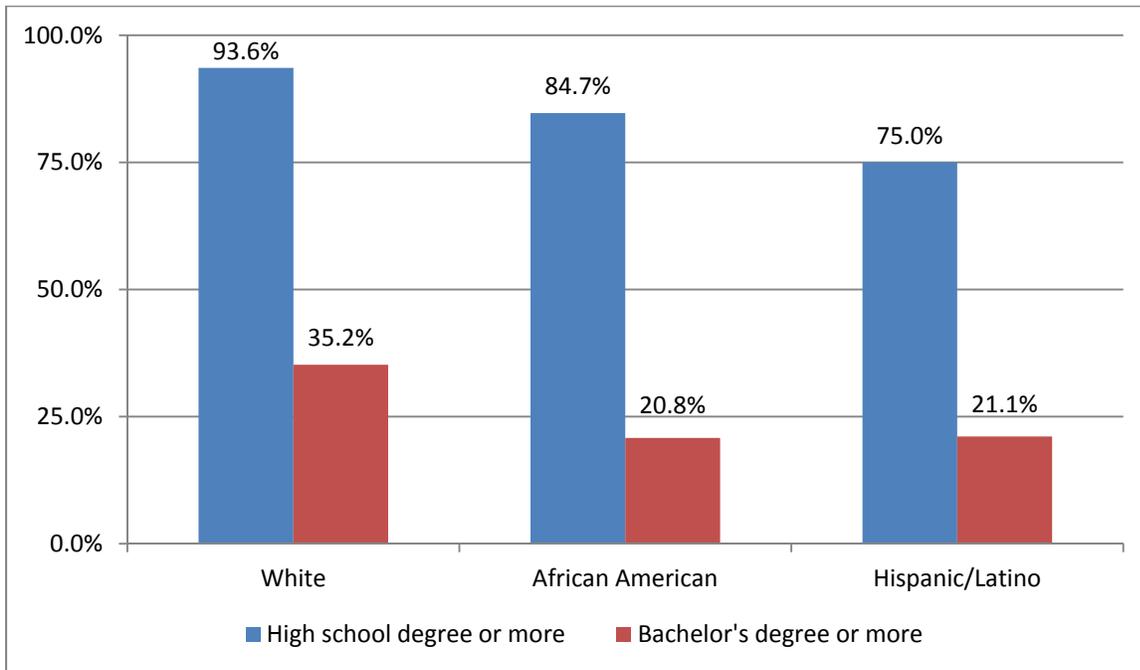
**Table 4. Drop Out Rates by School District by Race/Ethnicity and Economic Status**

	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Asian	Black/ African American	White/ Caucasian	Hispanic	Multi-racial	Economically Disadvantaged	All
Climax			0.0%	12.7%	0.0%		17.1%	12.1%
Comstock	33.3%	0.0%	25.5%	10.2%	16.7%	26.3%	19.7%	15.2%
Galesburg-Augusta	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	7.3%	0.0%	0.0%	7.5%	7.4%
Gull Lake	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	3.4%	20.0%	0.0%	5.4%	3.9%
Kalamazoo	33.3%	18.2%	14.9%	10.9%	14.5%	7.7%	17.8%	13.1%
Parchment	0.0%	0.0%	22.6%	10.2%	25.0%	0.0%	20.2%	12.3%
Portage	25.0%	6.9%	21.8%	6.7%	22.2%	0.0%	16.9%	8.1%
Schoolcraft				1.1%		0.0%	0.0%	1.1%
Vicksburg	0.0%	0.0%		4.0%	0.0%		9.5%	3.4%
Overall	20.1%	8.3%	17.5%	7.2%	16.1%	7.8%	16.5%	9.5%

Note: Some percentages based on small number of observations – Galesburg African American rate, for instance, is based on two students  
 Source: Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI), 2012 4-year cohort data

Disparities in educational attainment exist at other levels of education as well. Using a 3-year average of U.S. Census data, from 2009 to 2011 (see Figure 12) to smooth out the data, Whites are graduating from high school at a higher rate than Blacks or Hispanics. For every 100 Whites in the county who graduated from high school, only 90 Blacks have done so, and only 80 Hispanics. These disparities carry over to higher education as well. Thirty-five percent of Whites in the county have graduated from a 4-year college, while roughly 21% of Blacks and Hispanics have graduated from college. Put another way, for every 100 Whites that earn a 4-year college degree, only 60 Blacks and 60 Hispanics earn a 4-year college degree. Overall, this depicts a pattern of disparities in educational attainment for minorities, which only grows larger from high school to post-secondary education.

Figure 12. Educational Attainment by Race/Ethnicity in Kalamazoo County, 2011



Source: U.S. Census (B15002, 2011- 3 yr est)

## C. Economic Security and Financial Resources

### Census Poverty Threshold

Poverty is a major factor with far reaching implications for health equity and well-being; therefore no assessment of the need within Kalamazoo County would be complete without assessing the rate of poverty and the gap between family income and family need. Given its importance, researchers, governmental agencies, and non-profits have attempted to monitor and understand poverty in various ways ranging from demographic statistics, describing its impact on the individual, house-hold, or local community level, and gaining insight into how poverty is perceived by various stake holders and community members.

Table 5. Number and Percent of Persons Below Poverty by County, 2011

County	Persons in Poverty		County	Persons in Poverty	
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
<i>Michigan</i>	<i>1518458</i>	<i>15.7%</i>	Missaukee	2340	15.9%
Isabella	20067	31.4%	Sanilac	6760	15.8%
Mecosta	9192	23.6%	Tuscola	8518	15.4%
Clare	7141	23.5%	Alcona	1676	15.3%
Roscommon	5613	23.1%	Jackson	22889	15.1%
Houghton	7626	22.8%	Schoolcraft	1255	15.1%
Wayne	413437	22.7%	Manistee	3500	14.9%
Lake	2538	22.5%	Kent	87403	14.8%
Gladwin	5240	20.5%	Marquette	9265	14.8%
Ingham	53281	20.4%	Huron	4712	14.3%
Oscoda	1741	20.1%	Ontonagon	959	14.3%
Montcalm	12015	19.6%	Menominee	3353	14.2%
Iosco	4963	19.2%	Shiawassee	9983	14.2%
Osceola	4433	19.2%	Washtenaw	46039	14.2%
Oceana	5038	19.1%	Mackinac	1553	14.1%
Ogemaw	4077	19.0%	Alger	1181	14.0%
Van Buren	14209	18.9%	Delta	4959	13.6%
Genesee	79747	18.8%	Lenawee	13157	13.6%
<b>Kalamazoo</b>	<b>44656</b>	<b>18.6%</b>	Cass	6898	13.3%
Montmorency	1800	18.6%	St. Clair	21448	13.2%
Saginaw	36447	18.6%	Baraga	983	13.0%
Muskegon	30888	18.5%	Presque Isle	1720	12.9%
Arenac	2751	17.9%	Bay	13559	12.7%
Keweenaw	365	17.8%	Allegan	13935	12.6%
Chippewa	6043	17.7%	Otsego	2991	12.5%
Hillsdale	8034	17.6%	Benzie	2027	11.7%
Gratiot	6484	17.4%	Iron	1332	11.7%
Branch	7364	17.3%	Charlevoix	2883	11.2%
Cheboygan	4500	17.3%	Lapeer	9772	11.2%
Gogebic	2567	17.2%	Midland	9110	11.1%
Newaygo	8231	17.2%	Macomb	91429	11.0%
Alpena	5002	17.1%	Grand Traverse	9122	10.9%
Calhoun	22658	17.0%	Emmet	3420	10.6%
Crawford	2304	17.0%	Leelanau	2290	10.6%
Antrim	3932	16.7%	Monroe	15727	10.4%
Berrien	25698	16.7%	Clinton	7571	10.3%
St. Joseph	10104	16.7%	Barry	5949	10.1%
Wexford	5422	16.7%	Ottawa	25729	10.1%
Mason	4694	16.6%	Dickinson	2593	10.0%
Kalkaska	2781	16.5%	Eaton	10298	9.7%
Luce	890	16.3%	Oakland	113345	9.5%
Ionia	9567	16.1%	Livingston	11285	6.3%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2011 5-year estimates, S1701

Surprisingly, however, poverty, as a demographic and statistical designation can be defined and classified in multiple ways. The U.S. Census sets a poverty standard, which looks at median family or household income in the area (county) to determine threshold for the designation of being impoverished. In recent years, Kalamazoo has an overall poverty rate of 18.6%. Relative to other counties within the state of Michigan, Kalamazoo has the 18<sup>th</sup> highest poverty rate in the state, with approximately 44,656 people in the county living in poverty. Out of 83 counties, that places Kalamazoo in the top quarter of the state for high poverty rates.

To get a sense of how the poverty rates in Kalamazoo County are distributed geographically, we broke the data down into its local municipalities (see Table 6). Just over half of all poverty within Kalamazoo County itself is concentrated within the City of Kalamazoo (51.7%), with the next highest rate of poverty coming from Oshtemo Charter Township (11.5%), followed by Portage City (10.3%), and Kalamazoo Township (9.1%). These four townships and municipalities collectively account for 83% of the poverty in Kalamazoo County.

**Table 6. Number and Percent of Persons Below Poverty for Kalamazoo County MCD's, 2011**

Community	Persons in Poverty		Percent of County	Community	Persons in Poverty		Percent of County
	Number	Percent			Number	Percent	
Alamo Township	326	8.9%	0.7%	Parchment City	243	11.8%	0.5%
Brady Township	492	11.6%	1.1%	Pavilion Township	791	12.8%	1.8%
Charleston Township	253	13.1%	0.6%	Portage City	4590	10.0%	10.3%
Climax Township	112	4.9%	0.3%	Prairie Ronde Township	85	3.6%	0.2%
Comstock Charter Township	1974	13.4%	4.4%	Richland Township	525	7.0%	1.2%
Cooper Charter Township	815	8.3%	1.8%	Ross Township	199	4.2%	0.4%
Galesburg City	348	21.4%	0.8%	Schoolcraft Township	1047	12.9%	2.3%
Kalamazoo City	23102	34.7%	51.7%	Texas Charter Township	443	3.1%	1.0%
Kalamazoo Charter Township	4059	18.7%	9.1%	Wakeshma Township	127	9.0%	0.3%
Oshtemo Charter Township	5125	24.5%	11.5%				

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2011 5-year estimates, S1701

Poverty rates in Kalamazoo County are also not distributed evenly across race/ethnicity or across age demographics. Table 7 below illustrates how poverty rates in the county changed from 2000 to 2010 by race or ethnicity. While poverty rates increased for all groups, Blacks followed by Hispanics have the highest poverty rates in 2010, at 43.6% and 37.8%, respectively. The poverty rate grew the most for Hispanics, which was 73% higher in 2010 than a decade earlier. At 68% growth in poverty, the second highest rate of poverty growth occurred for Whites, although the total poverty in 2010 for Whites was less than half the rate for people who were multi-racial and Hispanic, and nearly a third the rate as for Blacks in 2010.

**Table 7. Poverty by Race/Ethnicity in Kalamazoo County, 2000-2010**

	Percent Below Poverty Line	
	2000	2010
White (non-Hispanic)	9.3%	15.6%
African American	29.2%	43.6%
Native American	17.4%	--*
Asian	20.6%	--
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	17.8%	--
Multi-Racial	25.2%	33.5%
Hispanic/Latino	21.8%	37.8%

Source: U.S. Census (S17001, P159) \* Number % based upon is too small, Census not reporting

With respect to age, longitudinal data was not available at the county level, but state level trends do help to shed light on how poverty rates have changed from 1990 to 2011. Between 1990 and 2000 poverty rates in Michigan declined for all age groups, although the decline was small for adults 18-64 years old, and for adults of retirement age (65+ years old); instead the majority of the decline in poverty rates occurred for children under the age of 18. By 2011, however, poverty rates for all age groups climbed considerable higher, well surpassing the 1990 levels. The largest overall gains in poverty occurred for children, for which one in four in Michigan were living in poverty in 2011. Poverty rates also increased for 18 to 64 year olds. Interestingly, poverty rates for the elderly (those 65 years of age and older), remained steady between 2000 and 2011. This last trend may change however in coming years as a result of the reduction of corporate or private retirement fund contributions, such as pensions, during this time period.

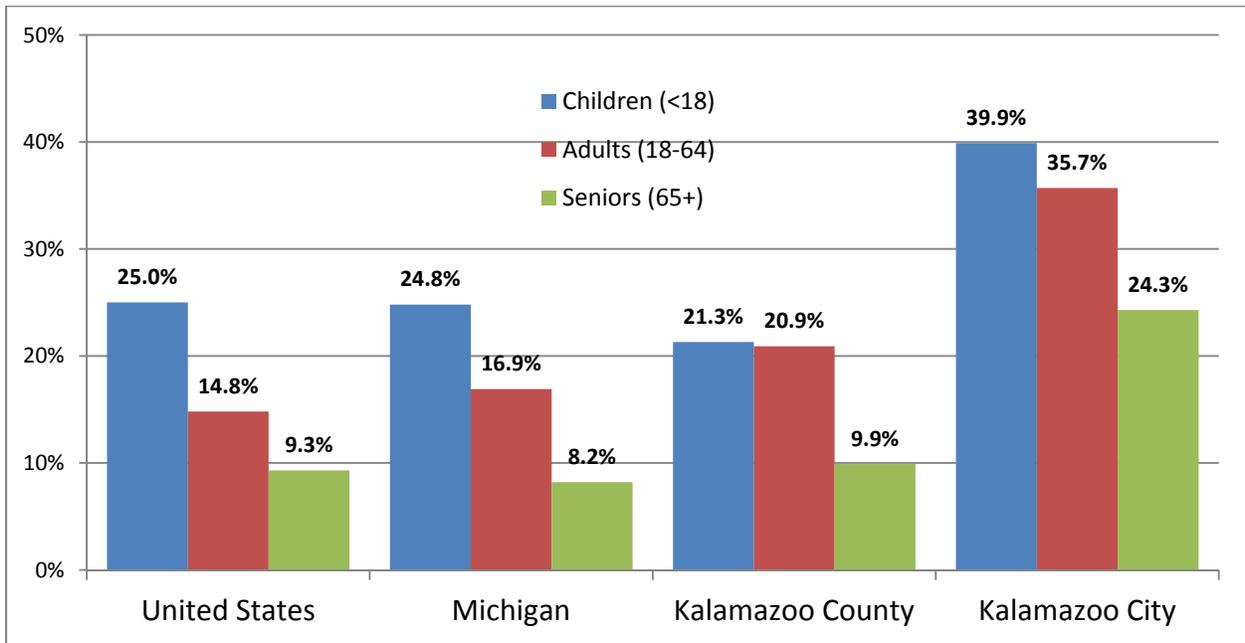
**Table 8. Poverty by Age in Michigan, 1990-2011**

	Percent in Poverty		
	1990	2000	2011
Under 18	18.6%	13.9%	24.8%
18 to 64	11.2%	9.6%	16.9%
65 and Over	10.8%	8.2%	8.2%

Source: CensusScope.org and U.S. Census, 2011 1 yr, DP03

Poverty data by age for Kalamazoo County and City were available for 2011, along with national and state comparison data. The poverty rate for children in the county was somewhat lower than state and national rates, yet county poverty rates for adults aged 18 to 64 was four percentage points higher than the state rate and over six percentage points higher than the national rate for this age group. Poverty rates for seniors in Kalamazoo County were comparable to although slightly higher than the national and state poverty rates for seniors. As for poverty rates in the city of Kalamazoo: poverty rates for children are nearly twice as high in the city than they are county wide, over 1.5 times higher for adults in the city than county wide, and 2.5 times higher for seniors in the city than county wide. For all age groups in Kalamazoo County, poverty appears to be concentrated in the City of Kalamazoo.

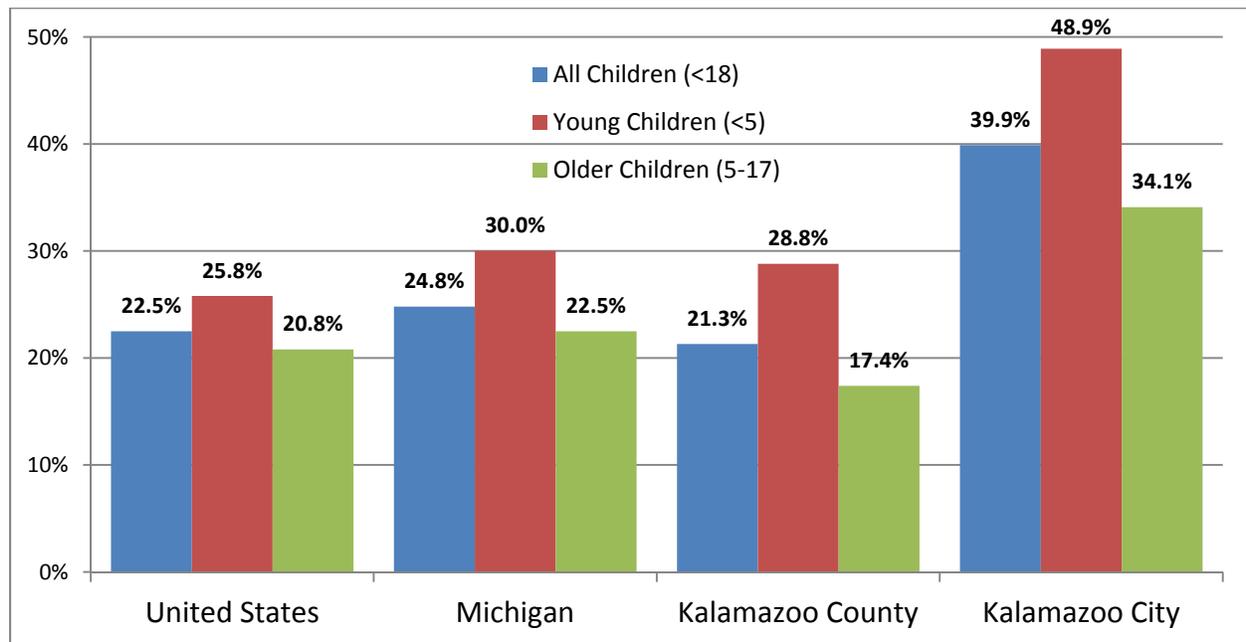
Figure 13. Poverty Rate by Age, 2011



Source: U.S. Census, 2011 1 yr, DP03

We were able to break the poverty data for children down further, into young children from birth to four years of age, and children five to 17 years of age (see Figure 14). These results revealed poverty rates for young children in Kalamazoo County resting between the national and state poverty rates for this age group, but poverty rates for older children falling below the national and state levels. However, in the City of Kalamazoo, the poverty rates for both young and older children were considerable higher than the county wide rates, as well as the national and state rates, and these rates were highest for young children. Overall, nearly one in every two young children and one in every three older children in the City of Kalamazoo are living in poverty.

Figure 14. Poverty Rates for Children, 2011



Source: U.S. Census, 2011 1 yr, DP03

### Marital Status

Poverty rates are also distributed differently across family or household types. Families with two parents in the household have the lowest rates of poverty across the national, state, county, and city, levels, and the poverty rates changed very little for this group at the national and state level. Locally, however, the rate of poverty for families with two parents in the household roughly doubled in both Kalamazoo County and the City of Kalamazoo. Across all levels, single mother families had the highest rates of poverty, and these rates were considerably higher in Kalamazoo County and the City of Kalamazoo than for single mothers at national and state level. Interestingly, the largest gains in poverty rates at the county and city level occurred for families that consisted of a single father. While the poverty rate for single father families in Kalamazoo County was under 9% in 2000, this number more than tripled to 34% in 2010. Also, poverty rates for single father families at the state level and in the city of Kalamazoo also more than doubled between 2000 and 2010. This trend may reflect the acceleration of loss of manufacturing and construction jobs during this time period; job types that have historically been held disproportionately by men.

Table 9. Poverty by Family Type, 2000-2010

	United States		Michigan		Kalamazoo County		Kalamazoo City	
	2000	2010	2000	2000	2000	2010	2000	2010
All families	9.2%	11.3%	7.4%	12.1%	6.5%	12.6%	13.6%	24.4%
Married couples	4.9%	5.6%	3.2%	5.5%	2.2%	4.0%	3.9%	8.6%
Single father families	13.6%	16.9%	11.5%	19.7%	8.8%	34.1%	13.5%	38.6%
Single mother families	26.5%	30.3%	24.0%	33.8%	25.4%	39.3%	33.8%	52.9%

Source: U.S. Census, P090, B17010

## Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) attempts to devise a standard for poverty based on household income levels from the previous year that also takes family size into consideration. These poverty guidelines correspond quite closely with the Census threshold and are updated by the DHHS annually. Table 10 below depicts the poverty guidelines based on location and family size. For instances, the poverty income level for a family of four living in Kalamazoo would be \$23,550.

**Table 10. Health and Human Services 2013 Poverty Guidelines**

Size of Family Unit	48 Contiguous States and D.C.	Alaska	Hawaii
1	\$11,490	\$14,350	\$13,230
2	15,510	19,380	17,850
3	19,530	24,410	22,470
4	23,550	29,440	27,090
5	27,570	34,470	31,710
6	31,590	39,500	36,330
7	35,610	44,530	40,950
8	39,610	49,560	45,570
For each additional person, add	4,020	5,030	4,620

Source: *Federal Register*, Vol. 78, No. 16, January 24, 2013, pp. 5182-5183

Furthermore, other means of estimating economic related hardships, although not explicitly labeled as poverty standards, exist. For instance, eligibility for government funded housing programs and other forms of assistance are based on thresholds below the family median income within the area. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimates the annual Median Family Income (MFI) and sets various thresholds around this area MFI. In 2013, the HUD estimated that the MFI for Kalamazoo County at \$62,300, and set standards for economic hardships for households of various sizes (see Table 11 below). Households who earn 80% of FMI for their size in the area are considered low income, and households that make 50% of FMI are considered very low income. For instance, A family of four in Kalamazoo County that makes \$49,850 to \$31,151 would be considered low income, and a family of four making \$31,151 or less would be considered very low income.

**Table 11. HUD Low and Very Low Family Median Income Limits, 2013**

Family Size	80% FMI	50% FMI
1 person	\$34,900	\$21,850
2 persons	39,900	24,950
3 persons	44,900	28,050
4 persons	49,850	31,150
5 persons	53,850	33,650
6 persons	57,850	36,150
7 persons	61,850	38,650
8 persons	65,850	41,150

Source: Housing and Urban Development, 2013

## Basic Calculation of Needs

While poverty levels indicate a very low level of income by abject standards for living, consideration of basic cost of living in a contemporary society are also important. The minimum monetary assets needed within a region for a household to afford shelter, food, child care, health care, and transportation require estimations of the typical cost of each of these standards, which also increase as the number in the household increases. HUD provides estimates for housing by compiling costs for rentals in the area. The fair market value of rentals of 2-bedroom to 4-bedroom apartments in Kalamazoo County increased from 2011 to 2013, with 4-bedroom apartments increasing the most, especially from 2012 to 2013. This may suggest the introduction of more high-end apartment or condo options in the county. Cost of 1-bedroom apartments remained relatively flat across the three years, and the cost of efficiencies actually became cheaper in 2013 than they were in the two previous years.

Table 12. HUD 2011-2013 Fair Market Rental Values in Kalamazoo

	2011	2012	2013
Efficiency	\$523	\$530	\$464
1 Bedroom	558	566	563
2 Bedrooms	678	688	716
3 Bedrooms	901	914	942
4 Bedrooms	940	954	1147

Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development

The Economic Policy Institute provides a more systematic estimate of the other various costs of living, and provides break downs of these costs for various household types, such as single and dual parent, and number of children. Table 13 depicts these basic needs expenses for the Kalamazoo and Portage combined area. With the exception of childcare costs for families with three or more children, the single most expensive basic needs cost for all family compositions is health care, which represents 22% to 28% of a family's basic needs expense. Childcare represents the second largest expense across the board, ranging from 16% to 26% of families' basic needs, and for households with three or more children, it represents the largest single expense of the household.

Taking the total of these basic needs expenses, it suggests that a family consisting of a single parent with one child will need to earn an annual income of \$48,433 to be economically self-sufficient in the Kalamazoo area. A four-person household will have varying basic needs, depending on its composition. For a household consisting of one parent with three children, and annual income of \$73,087 will be needed to reach self-sufficiency (assuming child care is needed), while a household consisting of two parents and two children will need to earn \$64,885 a year to be self-sufficient.

**Table 13. Building a Basic Needs Monthly Budget for Kalamazoo County**

Item	One parent/one child	One parent/two children	One parent/three children	Two parents/one child	Two parents/two children	Two parents/three children
Housing	\$716	\$716	\$942	\$716	\$716	\$942
Food	\$369	\$546	\$735	\$598	\$754	\$921
Child Care	\$781	\$1,172	\$1,563	\$781	\$1,172	\$1,563
Transportation	\$480	\$480	\$480	\$607	\$607	\$607
Health Care	\$1,003	\$1,334	\$1,395	\$1,337	\$1,397	\$1,457
Other Necessities	\$278	\$323	\$429	\$336	\$376	\$477
Taxes	\$409	\$426	\$547	\$379	\$385	\$514
Monthly Total	\$4,036	\$4,997	\$6,091	\$4,755	\$5,407	\$6,481
Annual Total	\$48,433	\$59,962	\$73,087	\$57,057	\$64,885	\$77,770

Source: Economic Policy Institute Basic Family Budget Calculator, for Kalamazoo-Portage, MI Area, July 2013 version

These value estimates for meeting basic needs are considerably higher than estimates for establishing poverty levels. As illustrated below, the income needed to meet basic needs for families requires around three times the poverty level of income for families of various compositions. Many families who are above the poverty threshold will nonetheless not earn enough to be self-sufficient, leaving such families to rely on other resources such as extended family or public support, to help meet some of their basic needs, such as for daycare; without such supports, these families may have to make tough choices as to what basic needs they may have to forgo. Furthermore, the gap between poverty level and self-sufficiency suggests that families earning incomes well above the poverty rate may nevertheless experience economic hardship, and are more likely to get knocked off track financially when unanticipated expenses occur, such as paying to fix a car, or if a major medical expense is needed that is not fully covered by their health care plan. Thus it is important and necessary to look at income levels that may be considerably higher than the poverty level in order to more fully assess the level of need in Kalamazoo County.

**Table 14. 2012 Federal Poverty Guidelines Compared to Basic Needs Budget**

	2013 DHHS Poverty Guideline at 100% for family size	2013 Basic Needs Budget for family size (Kalamazoo-Portage)	Basic Needs Budget as Percentage of Poverty Guideline
Single parent/1 child	\$15,510	\$48,433	312.3
Single parent/2 children	\$19,530	\$59,962	307.0
Single Parent/3 children	\$23,550	\$73,087	310.3
2 Parents/1 child	\$19,530	\$57,057	292.2
2 Parents/2 children	\$23,550	\$64,885	275.5
2 Parents/3 children	\$27,570	\$77,770	282.1

Although no consistent records are kept directly on the amount of people who struggle to meet their basic needs, several demographic data indicators can help to shed some light on this matter. First, the Census does keep track of rates of people who are 200% above the poverty level, which serves as an indicator that will capture many of the people who, although not in abject poverty, nevertheless struggle to earn enough income to be self-sufficient and to meet their basic needs. Second, the Department of Labor provides records of median incomes based on geographic areas such as county, city, and state; changes in this more macro index can also help to estimate the degree to which financial resources available to families in the region have changed or reduced with time. Lastly, data on those eligible for food assistance through federal school lunch programs for households with children and for households receiving SNAP benefits help to shed some light on those who, although above the poverty line, nonetheless struggle to meet their food needs. For these data, the Michigan Department of Education keeps track of students who are eligible for free or reduced school lunches and the Census polls people on use of food stamps/SNAP benefits in the past year; in each case, these standards determine a threshold that is somewhat greater than the poverty level, but at which families are likely to struggle to meet their basic food needs.

Table 15 illustrates trends from 2000 to 2010 in the portion of people who earn 200% or less of the poverty level, a group who are likely to struggle to meet their basic financial needs. This segment of the population grew by roughly 10 percentage points at the state, county, and city levels during the decade following 2000, which were all about twice the growth rate of this cohort nationally during the same time period. As of 2010, people who struggle to meet their basic needs represent over a third of the state of Michigan and Kalamazoo County residents, and it represents over half of all people living in the City of Kalamazoo. At a more macro-level, the median income in Kalamazoo County, as with many other counties in Michigan, dropped over the same time period. As illustrated in Table 16 below, in Kalamazoo County this drop in typical household income amounted to \$9,276 less income available to help meet basic needs; in the City of Kalamazoo, this drop in amount of income was closer to \$10,000 less than a decade earlier. Overall, this pattern suggests a relatively pervasive amount of need for assistance to meet basic needs in Kalamazoo County and a dramatic drop in financial resources to help a household maintain self-sufficiency.

**Table 15. Total Persons at 100% and 200% of Poverty in past 12 months, 2000 and 2010**

	United States	Michigan	Kalamazoo County	Kalamazoo City
<b>2010</b>				
200% of Poverty				
Number	103,725,710	3,444,954	90,679	37,503
Percent	34.4%	35.7%	37.3%	55.6%
<b>2000</b>				
200% of Poverty				
Number	81,194,609	2,468,283	63,281	31,366
Percent	29.6%	25.4%	27.7%	45.9%

Source: U.S. Census, 2010 S1701 and 2000 QTP34, 1 year numbers

**Table 16. Trend in Median Household Income, 2000 and 2010**

	2000*	2010	\$ Change	% Change
United States	\$53,177	\$51,222	-\$1,955	-3.7%
Michigan	\$56,562	\$46,861	-\$9,701	-17.2%
Allegan County	\$58,013	\$48,132	-\$9,881	-17.0%
Barry County	\$59,288	\$51,395	-\$7,893	-13.3%
Calhoun County	\$49,282	\$41,467	-\$7,815	-15.9%
Kalamazoo County	\$53,212	\$43,936	-\$9,276	-17.4%
Kalamazoo City	\$39,495	\$29,886	-\$9,609	-24.3%
St. Joseph County	\$51,102	\$43,964	-\$7,138	-14.0%
Van Buren County	\$49,848	\$42,234	-\$7,614	-15.3%

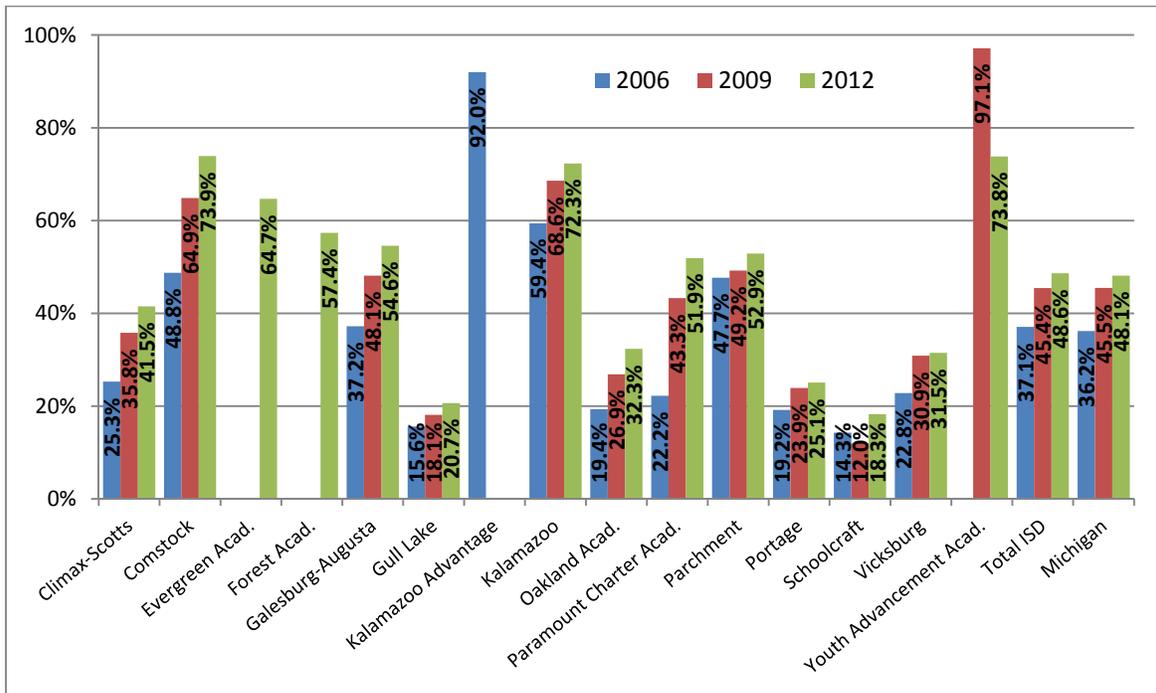
\*Adjusted to 2010 dollars using CPI from U.S. Dept of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Note: Dept. of Labor Calculates Median Income differently than the formula used by HUD

Source: U.S. Census, DP03, 3 yr est

Next, the portion of students in Kalamazoo County who are eligible for free or reduced lunch has grown larger over recent years in every school district in the county, with eight out of 15 schools in 2012 having over half of their students eligible for free or reduced lunch. Although these rates are highest for districts that encompass the Kalamazoo metro area, school districts such as Kalamazoo and Comstock, which each have over 70% of their students eligible for free or reduced lunch in 2012, but rates have also grown considerable in rural districts such as Climax and Galesburg. In fact, the rate of free or reduced lunch eligibility in the Climax school district grew by 64% from 2006 to 2012; over that same time period the rate grew by 47% for the Galesburg school district. Overall, across the ISD of Kalamazoo County, the portion of students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch grew from about one in three in 2006 to nearly one in two in 2012. Ultimately, these data suggest that an alarming amount of households throughout Kalamazoo County, who have school age children, are now struggling to meet their basic needs.

Figure 15. Free and Reduced Lunch Trends by Kalamazoo County School Districts



Source: Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI)

Additionally, the portion of households receiving food assistance in Kalamazoo County has increased over recent years (see Table 17). In 2005, 8.1% of all households in the county received food assistance; however, from 2005 to 2011, this portion had more than doubled in size. By 2011, one in five households reported receiving food assistance over the last year. This represents a substantial increase in the number of households who need assistance in meeting their basic food needs.

Table 17. Kalamazoo County Residents Receiving Food Assistance, 2005-2011

Households Receiving Food Stamp/SNAP Benefits		
2011	19,402	19.9%
2010	17,133	17.3%
2009	16,520	16.7%
2008	11,597	11.8%
2007	9,032	9.2%
2006	9,688	10.0%
2005	7,786	8.1%

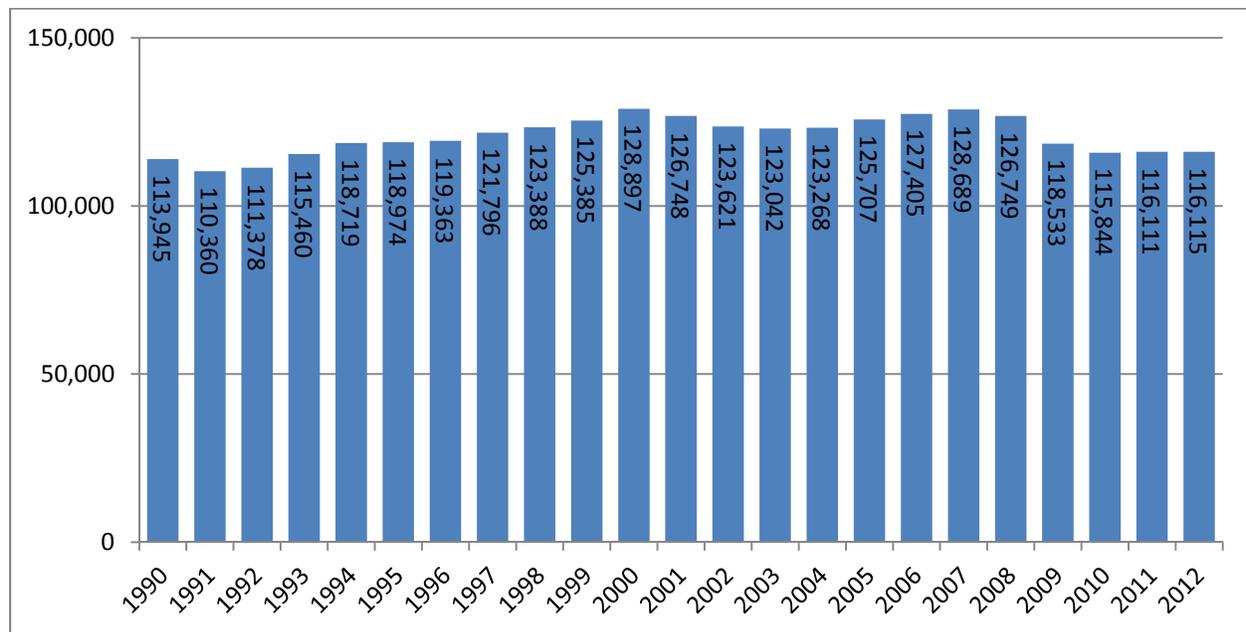
Source: Census DP03, 1 year

## D. Employment Opportunities

### Labor Force/Employment

The overall size of the labor market in Kalamazoo County has ebbed and flowed over the years, corresponding closely with three national economic recessions between 1990 and 2012 (see Figure 16). The total number employed in the county dipped in 1991, 2001 to 2003, and from 2008 through 2010. From 2010 to 2012 the numbers remained stagnate, with a net gain of a paltry 271 jobs being added to the local economy during this time. At its peak in the year 2000, the total jobs in Kalamazoo County reached 128,897. Since then, the county lost over 12,000 jobs, or 10% of its peak volume as of 2012.

Figure 16. Total Employment in Kalamazoo County, 1990-2012

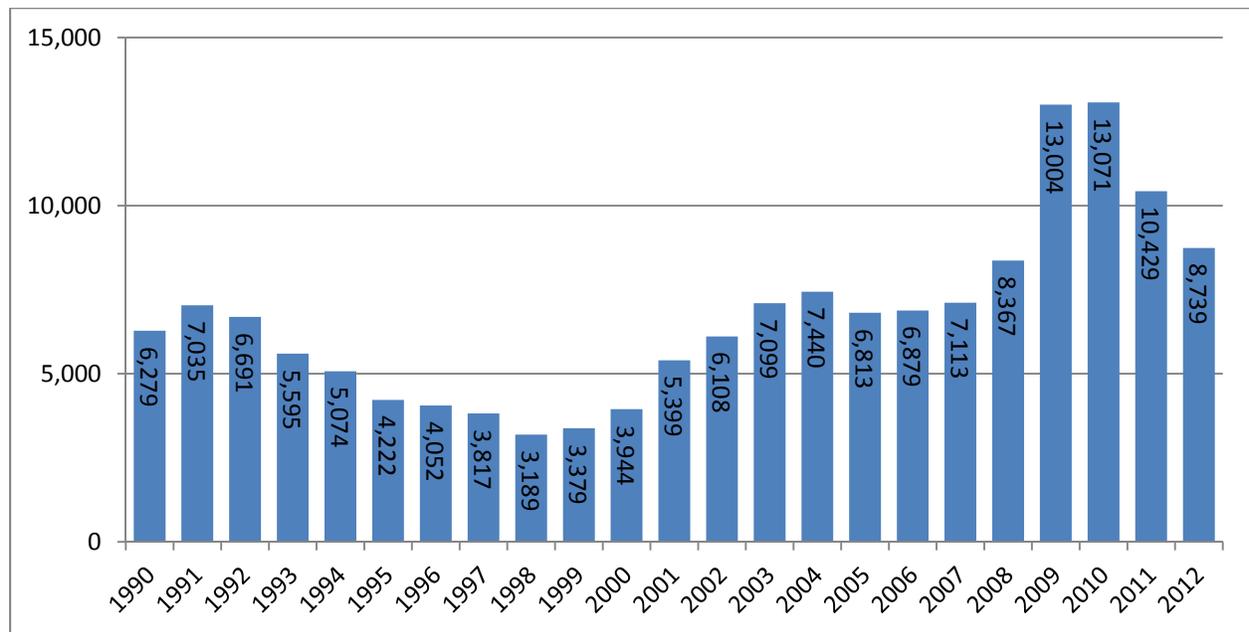


Source: Michigan Labor Market Information

In addition to the overall employment numbers, the unemployment numbers in Kalamazoo County provides an index of the level of need in the area (see Figure 17). Like the employment numbers, unemployment from 1990 to 2012 also illustrates the impact of the three recessions during this time period. In 1990 there were 6,279 people out of work for an unemployment rate of 5.2%. During the recession in the early 1990s, unemployment peaked at 6.0% of the work force. The unemployment rate was at its lowest in 1998, when it dipped as low as 2.5% or just 3,189 people looking for work. Unemployment then climbed higher and peaked at 7,440 people in 2004 following the recession in the early 2000s. Although the unemployment rate was 5.7% during this time, the total numbers of unemployed was more than double the low rates of 1998. Unemployment numbers then leveled off after 2004, before climbing again during the great recession of 2008.

At its peak, the unemployment numbers were 13,071 people, or a rate of 10.1% of the work force. This amounts to more than double the unemployment count of 1990. Since 2010, unemployment numbers have improved, but as of 2012, the rate remained at 7% and the number of people still looking for work—8,739 people—remained higher than when the recession first began. Furthermore, the unemployment numbers during and since the great recession of 2012, remain higher than at any other time point in the past three decades. When the overall employment numbers are taken into consideration, it suggests that the unemployment count for the county improved almost entirely by people dropping out of the labor force, rather than by new jobs being added to the local economy. For instance, between 2010 and 2012, only 271 jobs were added; however, the unemployment numbers dropped by 4,332 during this same time period. This suggests that roughly 4,061 people dropped out of the labor market during this time, and are no longer providing income to their households that would help them to meet their basic needs and to maintain self-sufficiency.

Figure 17. Total Unemployment in Kalamazoo County, 1990-2012



Source: Michigan Labor Market Information

To better understand where the lost jobs went, Table 18 below breaks the jobs out by major sectors. Most employment sectors in Kalamazoo County lost jobs from 2000 to 2010, but the greatest losses were in historically male dominated fields. For instance, manufacturing sector, which was once the largest employment sector in Kalamazoo County, lost over 10,000 jobs during the decade, falling to the number two spot. Construction jobs, another male dominated field, lost over 27% of its jobs during the decade and fell from the 7<sup>th</sup> largest employment sector in the county to the 10<sup>th</sup> largest. This pattern is consistent with trends found in the household poverty data, whereby poverty rates for single father households with children showed the largest gains in poverty during this same time period.

A few sectors managed to buck the recession trends and actually gain jobs during this time period. The greatest gains occurred in the health care sector, which added nearly 4,000 jobs

between 2000 and 2010, and climbed from the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest employment sector at the start of the decade, to the largest by the decade's end. The accommodations and food services sector gained the next largest amount during this time period, adding over 1500 new jobs. This was followed by the finance and insurance services sector, with just over 1000 new jobs added. Wholesale trade and educational services each gained over 600 jobs during this time period. Although the job gains are a positive, some of these jobs, especially those in the food service sector, are likely to be low-wage jobs that won't adequately replace high paying jobs in sectors like manufacturing. This again suggests that more people, even those with jobs, will likely be in need of assistance to meet their basic needs.

**Table 18. Employment by Sector for Kalamazoo County, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter, 2000-2010**

	2000	2005	2010	2000-2005 Change		2005-2010 Change		2000-2010 Change	
				Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Total, All Industries</b>	<b>102,423</b>	<b>103,932</b>	<b>93,856</b>	<b>1,509</b>	<b>1.5%</b>	<b>-10,076</b>	<b>-9.7%</b>	<b>-8,567</b>	<b>-8.4%</b>
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	1,471	1,736	1,738	265	18.0%	2	0.1%	267	18.2%
Mining	53	79	32	26	49.1%	-47	-59.5%	-21	-39.6%
Construction	5,387	5,534	3,922	147	2.7%	-1,612	-29.1%	-1,465	-27.2%
Manufacturing	25,664	20,164	15,449	-5,500	-21.4%	-4,715	-23.4%	-10,215	-39.8%
Wholesale trade	3,586	3,449	4,278	-137	-3.8%	829	24.0%	692	19.3%
Retail trade	14,265	13,352	11,825	-913	-6.4%	-1,527	-11.4%	-2,440	-17.1%
Transportation and warehousing	2,383	2,685	2,024	302	12.7%	-661	-24.6%	-359	-15.1%
Information	1,543	1,436	1,228	-107	-6.9%	-208	-14.5%	-315	-20.4%
Finance and insurance	3,470	4,662	4,520	1,192	34.4%	-142	-3.0%	1,050	30.3%
Real estate and rental and leasing	1,602	1,728	1,621	126	7.9%	-107	-6.2%	19	1.2%
Professional and technical services	3,951	3,651	3,712	-300	-7.6%	61	1.7%	-239	-6.0%
Management of companies and enterprises	371	313	277	-58	-15.6%	-36	-11.5%	-94	-25.3%
Administrative and waste services	7,542	8,382	6,625	840	11.1%	-1,757	-21.0%	-917	-12.2%
Educational services	1,632	2,427	2,269	795	48.7%	-158	-6.5%	637	39.0%
Health care and social assistance	13,462	16,655	17,411	3,193	23.7%	756	4.5%	3,949	29.3%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	1,676	1,917	1,446	241	14.4%	-471	-24.6%	-230	-13.7%
Accommodation and food services	9,636	11,244	11,182	1,608	16.7%	-62	-0.6%	1,546	16.0%
Other services, except public administration	4,456	4,235	4,046	-221	-5.0%	-189	-4.5%	-410	-9.2%
Public Administration									
Federal	na	1,066	1,234	-	-	168	15.8%	-	-
State	na	3,829	4,073	-	-	244	6.4%	-	-
Local	na	9,370	8,868	-	-	-502	-5.4%	-	-

Source: Michigan Labor Market Information

## What jobs will be available in coming years in Kalamazoo County?

Future forecasts also shed light on what sectors are likely to produce jobs in Kalamazoo County over the coming years. Table 19 below illustrates the top 19 sectors forecasted to grow new jobs in the county through the year 2018. The trend of major growth in the health care sectors discussed above is expected to continue, with the top four projected occupations for growth all stemming from the health care sector. Furthermore, five out of the top seven areas for job growth are health care related occupations. Two of the top ten areas for job growth are food services related jobs; once again, these jobs are likely to be low-wage positions and less likely to provide adequate income or benefits to help a person to be self-sufficient. Moreover, jobs in fields like the food services sector are also less likely to provide benefits such as employer provided health insurance that would further allow a person or family to afford health care coverage and offset these expenses to help a family focus on financing other basic needs such as childcare, transportation, and perhaps most important of all, housing.

**Table 19. Top Growth Occupational Categories for Kalamazoo Area, 2008 - 2018**

Occupation	2008 Estimated Employment	2018 Projected Employment	Numeric Change
Total, All Occupations	155,325	162,440	7,115
<i>Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations</i>	8,427	9,731	1,304
<i>Healthcare Support Occupations</i>	4,931	6,078	1,147
<i>Nursing, Psychiatric, and Home Health Aides</i>	3,341	4,222	881
<i>Health Diagnosing and Treating Practitioners</i>	5,515	6,390	875
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	13,157	14,028	871
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	5,999	6,725	726
<i>Registered Nurses</i>	3,119	3,683	564
Education, Training, and Library Occupations	10,000	10,557	557
Food and Beverage Serving Workers	6,533	7,077	544
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	21,975	22,497	522
Personal Care and Service Occupations	4,516	5,008	492
Sales and Related Occupations	15,702	16,131	429
Construction and Extraction Occupations	5,930	6,357	427
<i>Health Technologists and Technicians</i>	2,714	3,123	409
Business Operations Specialists	3,256	3,646	390
Other Personal Care and Service Workers	3,325	3,693	368
Construction Trades Workers	5,010	5,378	368
Financial Specialists	2,743	3,079	336
Information and Record Clerks	5,187	5,493	306

Source: Michigan Labor Market Information

## F. Adequate, Affordable, and Safe Housing

### Poverty and Housing

Although all basic needs are important, access to affordable and safe housing is perhaps the most fundamental to achieving self-sufficiency. One solid macro-level indicator of the availability of adequate and safe housing in an area is the number of new private housing units built. Since new homes must be built to revised codes and standards for safety and efficiency, the number of new homes built in an area provides a pulse of the safe and adequate housing stock in an area. Furthermore, the average cost of those homes are often in close synchronization with the market of existing housing stocks within an area, which may be to lesser degrees adequate, efficient, and safe, and may cost more to maintain than a new home. Thus the price of new homes also provides an indicator of the housing affordability for the area.

In the Kalamazoo/Portage area, the number of new homes being built dropped considerably between 2004 and 2012. In 2004, 1,867 new homes were built in the Kalamazoo/Portage area and this number fell year-after-year until 2011 (see Table 20). In 2012, the number rebounded slightly to 470 new homes being built, although this remains down 75% from its 2004 levels. During this same time, the average cost of new homes increased over time, with the exception of a one-year dip in 2008. The cost of purchasing a new home in 2012 was over \$50,000 more than in 2004, which far outpaces the meager inflation occurring during this same time period. Taken together, these data suggest that both the availability and affordability of good housing options in the Kalamazoo area declined over recent years. Additionally, with fewer new home options in the area it is likely that people looking for homes or who rent homes are choosing increasingly from older existing homes, which are likely more expensive to maintain and less efficient with respect to utilities. This suggests that need for assistance in paying for and/or maintaining affordable housing in the Kalamazoo area has increased considerably since 2004.

**Table 20. New Privately Owned Housing Units Authorized in Kalamazoo-Portage 2004-2012**

	Number of Units	Average Cost
2004	1867	\$149,200
2005	1610	\$163,700
2006	1439	\$166,500
2007	1000	\$198,500
2008	627	\$168,700
2009	401	\$192,600
2010	367	\$197,200
2011	351	\$203,300
2012	470	\$201,700

Source: Census construction data

On the opposite end of housing availability and affordability assessments are counts on the number of people who have no home or apartment of which to speak. While it is difficult to

assess this homeless or housing insecure population within a region, as they tend to be more transient and lack a physical address by which to locate them, the State of Michigan has been developing some systematic methods for indexing the homeless population and avoiding redundancy in counts as they move from one region to another. The relatively new Michigan State Homeless Management Information System (MSHMIS) is a single database platform that provides this unduplicated count of homeless persons living in each region of Michigan. As depicted in Table 21 below, in 2008 Kalamazoo County had 3,666 homeless people who resided there for some extended period of time, and the homeless population in the county increased by 29% over the following four years. Between 2008 and 2011, the portion of the homeless population in Michigan who resided in Kalamazoo remained steady between 6% and 7% of the period. Overall, this suggests that the segment of the population in Kalamazoo County in need of basic housing has increased considerably over recent years, although this rate of increase is relatively on par with the growth in the homeless population state-wide.

**Table 21. Number Homeless**

	State	Kalamazoo	Percent Kalamazoo
2008	65,762	3,666	6%
2009	74,213	4,895	7%
2010	77,086	4,928	6%
2011	71,713	4,714	7%

Source: Michigan State Homeless Management Information System (MSHMIS)

## **PART II – Community and Client Engagement**

### **A. Introduction**

The Kalamazoo County Community Action Agency wished to engage clients and community stakeholders as part of an effort to gain community input and feedback to help the agency to better plan and realign programs and services to promote health, well-being, and self-sufficiency in Kalamazoo County. To this end, six focus groups were conducted to gather qualitative information about residents' experiences living in Kalamazoo County. The focus groups covered the following topics: School Readiness and Educational Attainment, Employment Security and Financial Resources, Employment Opportunity, Availability and Utilization of Quality Medical Care and Access to Healthy Food, Adequate, Affordable and Safe Housing, Community Safety, and Transportation.

### **B. Research Methodology**

Focus groups varied in size from 1-20 people and were conducted at the Edison Neighborhood Association, the Village of Kalamazoo Apartments, Bronson Park, Second Baptist Church, the Eastside Neighborhood Association, and with a service-based Rotary Club, called the Rotaract. These groups were selected using a two-step process. First, geographical areas with the highest poverty rates were selected using Census tract data. These tracts resided in the City of Kalamazoo. Second, groups and neighborhood associations within the six Census tract areas with the highest rates of poverty were targeted and recruited to participate in focus groups by the Kalamazoo County Community Action Agency and the Center for Health Equity. Flyers were created and used to help canvass and recruit for these groups. Lastly, efforts were made in selecting the focus groups to capture a diverse range of clients and community stakeholders.

The focus groups lasted from 45 to 120 minutes and included approximately 60 participants total. Of these participants, approximately 36 were female and 24 were male. All of the participants in the Village of Kalamazoo Apartments and the participant at Eastside Neighborhood Association were female. The majority of the Second Baptist group participants and the Rotaract group were also female. The participants at Bronson Park and the Edison Neighborhood Association were primarily male.

With respect to race and ethnicity, 30 participants across the focus groups were Black or African American, 29 were White and one was Hispanic. Nearly the entire Rotaract group was White with two participants identifying as Black or African American and one as Hispanic. All of the participants at Second Baptist, Eastside Neighborhood, and Village of Kalamazoo Apartments identified as Black or African American. Twelve of the 14 Bronson Park participants were White and two were Black or African American. Three of the four participants at Edison Neighborhood were White with the fourth identifying as Black.

With respect to age, most participants in the Rotaract and the Eastside Neighborhood groups were 24-44 years of age. The majority of participants at the Edison Neighborhood and Second Baptist were 45-64 years old and many of the participants in Bronson Park were ages 18-

23. Through the course of the conversations, most of the focus group participants revealed that they received public benefits of some kind, most commonly Medicaid or SNAP benefits.

## C. Research Results

### Top Community Concerns

At the start of each focus group, residents were asked about their top concerns. Their responses represent the issues at the top-of-mind for community members and stakeholders. While residents highlight the numerous educational opportunities and good upkeep of some neighborhoods as community highlights, the conversations jumped right into concerns for the community. Top concerns identified by respondents relate to the expense of health care, lack of affordable housing, and lack of employment opportunities. Residents from the Second Baptist Church, Eastside Neighborhood, and Village of Kalamazoo Apartments are most concerned about cost of health care, employment, and affordable housing. Homeless participants in Bronson Park and residents from the Second Baptist Church are specifically concerned about preventing police harassment and providing more opportunities for individuals with felonies to get back onto their feet. Residents in the Edison Neighborhood voiced concerns about lack of economic activity in the area, crime, condition of the aging housing stock, and affordable childcare. Members of the Rotaract group identify barriers to employment and problems occurring within the educational system, including the cost relative to the value of post-secondary education.

Specifically, respondents identify the following top-of-mind concerns with some frequency and across more than one focus group:

- Affordability of health care
  - Co-pays and deductibles
  - Care for children with special needs
  - Cost of medication
  - Cost of health insurance
- Differential treatment in the Emergency Room due to race
- Education
  - K-12 funding
  - Rising cost of college
- Job training for various populations (e.g., seniors, those with felonies)
- Lack of affordable child care
- Lack of affordable/subsidized housing
- Lack of employment for both youth and adults (and experience to gain employment)
- Neighborhood violence, crime and drug abuse
- Police harassment
- Stigma of felony record

### **Direct Statements from Focus Groups:**

*“It seems like they don’t have enough options for someone who has a felony and is trying to do right and get a job. And (there are) some places—but not many—that hire convicted felons but it’s awfully crowded. It’s crowded and so you got to lie about who you are or have your address somewhere else; you got to do all these things to get through the system to get something right for you.”* (Bronson Park)

*“There are not enough daycares in this neighborhood in general to accommodate all the folks that live here who work. So it means you have to run your child all the way out to Portage; to that nice daycare in Portage, and then run back to Edison to go to work.”* (Edison Neighborhood)

*“A lot of [area homes] are falling, their wood’s rotting, paint issues, a lot of folks can’t afford to maintain...they are big too...and so a lot of folks can’t afford to replace the roofs, the siding, those kinds of things...even inside, quality of life issues are going on.”* (Edison Neighborhood)

*“I have a daughter—she has three kids. Her kids are on Medicaid; she has no health insurance at home and in order for her to go to the doctor she has to spend over \$800. She doesn’t have that, because she’s trying to pay rent, so that is a concern.”* (Second Baptist Church)

*“For a lot of young people in the community, they may have felonies but they haven’t been to prison, and they are not going anywhere. Since they’re not going anywhere you’re creating another subculture. And when you do that, people are disenfranchised. ... So they are easily discouraged and think ‘I might just go back and do what I was doing before’. And we’re trying to tell them no; keep going, keep going; it’s going to get better. And they don’t see their situation getting any better. If something could be said to the employers; they’re talking that they want to work with the people in the community and help things get better. Maybe they need to look at some of their [hiring] practices.”* (Second Baptist Church)

*“I’ve been looking for a job, I’m pretty much out of income and I’m going through a lot to try to find a job. And a lot of places say since I really haven’t been working for a while; they want that experience and it’s like ugh—how do you get work experience when you don’t have a job?”* (Village of Kalamazoo Apartments)

## **School Readiness and Educational Attainment**

### **Positives about Community’s Educational System**

For the most part, respondents across all groups feel the schools in Kalamazoo are good – both K-12<sup>th</sup> grade and university/college systems. Many feel the schools work well with the youth but limited funding is a problem. Some have cited this lack of funding or further cuts of supports as having an important impact on a child’s academic success. Many agree there is much opportunity to participate in higher education, with KVCC, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo College, and Davenport College all listed as great educational resources.

Residents would like to see an increase in:

- Attention to the basics of math and reading
- Hiring of dedicated teachers
- Parent involvement
- Support for parents to better help students with homework
- Work on the “soft skills” (e.g., timeliness, respect)

#### **Direct Statements from Focus Groups:**

*“We’re in a jewel of a community because we have the Everest [in higher education]: we have KVCC; we have Western Michigan University, K College, Davenport, Ross, whatever; we got everything right here.”* (Second Baptist Church)

*“I don’t necessarily agree with the curriculum or a lot of the things they are doing. A lot of times the kids, they don’t have individual books to bring home, so they have homework, and it’s like where is your book? I can help you with this but where is your book? I haven’t done this in umpteen years, and you know, I need to refresh myself, and it’s like, ‘I don’t know, I don’t have a book,’ and not even a math book to come home, and like talking to my son, ‘When is the last time you’ve done a book report?’ And he’s like, ‘A what?’”* (Village of Kalamazoo Apartments)

*“I can’t help him if I don’t know what the assignment is. I have nothing tangible to look at. I’ve been out of school for twenty years; I need some help here. Even my daughter, it’s a struggle, it’s a struggle. And I hate to say it but a lot of the teachers are not as dedicated as others, which I guess that is [there in] any profession, some people in it for the, for whatever reason but they are not as dedicated.”* (Village of Kalamazoo Apartments)

*“A lot of it is the funding for the K-12 schools. There has to be cuts, I understand that, but our K-12 schools are suffering - they can’t provide the services that are necessary for our kids. And for a lot of the districts that we work with, bond programs are the only way to release that general fund to buy textbooks, to buy the buses to get kids there. Without those, they will be dissolved. This year, there are two or three districts that no longer exist because of that financial pressure.”* (Rotaract)

*“One really impressive thing that I noticed that Kalamazoo Public Schools is doing is the youth development center. I don’t know if anyone is familiar with that but it’s located by the Kalamazoo courthouse. I think it serves two Kalamazoo middle schools, maybe three. I think it costs money to the students but it’s a really minimal amount, like five dollars a week for every day after school tutoring and it’s really inexpensive and it’s all run by volunteers and maybe one paid staff member. I think that would be really interesting to expand that to other schools. I know they don’t have a cap on attendance but they do get shorthanded with volunteers.”* (Rotaract)

*“The problem that the public sees is the kids that are coming from families that don’t value education. The uneducated parent feels intimidated, a failure, and all of those negative things you can think of when the word education gets mentioned to them.”* (Edison Neighborhood)

## Attributes Preventing On-Time High School Graduation

Residents feel the following often stand in the way of students graduating on time:

- Bullying
- Lack of knowledge of the necessary reading and writing skills
- Lack of student's academic confidence
- Negative influence of peer groups
- Pushing students into AP classes who are not prepared
- Unsupportive home environment

### Direct Statements from Focus Groups:

*"There is still this huge gap between 5<sup>th</sup> graders that could read and those that don't know what 'the' was. There is still that huge gap with KPS, even with The [Kalamazoo] Promise."*

(Rotaract)

*"Drugs, being around the wrong people...It has something to do with being in the home too. Not being encouraged, not being praised. Some kids just don't feel appreciated."*

(Eastside Neighborhood)

*"There is a big issue with bullying. A child isn't going to want to go to school if they feel like they are being picked on constantly. And then you go and you talk to the teachers and you talk to the principals and 'Oh, we'll handle it.' And then the next week you are right back in the same situation again. So I don't know exactly what needs to be done, but something needs to be done."*

(Village of Kalamazoo Apartments)

## Attributes Preventing College Attendance

Residents feel the following stand in the way of students attending college:

- Lack of parent involvement
- Lack of study skills
- Past drug record
- Pushing kids through high school who are unprepared for college
- Street life
- Too much emphasis on college vs. vocational school

### Direct Statements from Focus Groups:

*"If you haven't developed those study habits that you need in high school, which I don't think they do, I guess that could be a barrier."*

(Village of Kalamazoo Apartments)

*“If you got drug charges, the main thing is the drug charge. You can’t get no money, can’t get no student loans.” (Bronson Park)*

*“I believe that some kids just get pushed right through whether they get it or they don’t get it. They just keep them going.” (Village of Kalamazoo)*

*“They get caught up in the street life, they get to drinking and like I said, there they go, doing drugs, and doing other things.” (Eastside Neighborhood)*

*“One of the main reasons why some of the kids don’t take advantage of the Promise is that their parents aren’t able to effectively teach their kids to be able to take advantage of the Promise, whether it’s ABC literacy, or financial literacy, medical literacy, or just human sense literacy; it’s a problem.” (Edison Neighborhood)*

*“The problem in high school is that they only push you for a college degree. It’s like you have to get a college degree. They almost talk down to the kids that don’t want to go to college; they kind of put them on the back burner. It’s ridiculous.” (Rotaract)*

### **Impact of the Kalamazoo Promise**

All residents feel the Kalamazoo Promise has positively impacted the community. Specifically, residents mention that the Promise:

- Gives parents another tool to encourage their children
- Has led to more people choosing to move to and live in Kalamazoo
- Is a tremendous opportunity for youth
- Provides youth and their parents with hope

### **Direct Statements from Focus Groups:**

*“With the Kalamazoo Promise now there is a focus on letting all students know that higher education can be an option for them.” (Rotaract)*

*“It’s making parents you know, pushing the kids more into going to school and you know, and getting them up out there you know, getting them ready for their education. I think that it has done that and it has brought a lot of people here too. You know, out-of-towners.” (Eastside Neighborhood)*

*“Well I think it’s given a lot more kids a lot more hope whereas before they thought they might not be able to afford to go to college... So, I just think, it’s one more tool, or it’s something that a parent can use, to help encourage that child to continue to do better or to be able to receive it.” (Village of Kalamazoo Apartments)*

Some residents felt it is important to remember that attending a university is still very expensive even with the Promise, as it only finances tuition. Also, some feel that the Promise has

contributed to a higher college dropout rate as unprepared students feel they must take advantage of this opportunity.

**Direct Statements from Focus Groups:**

*“I think that everybody has to come to grips with the high cost of education and start looking more locally and looking at attending a more local community college instead of a university. Maybe staying at home. ... Kalamazoo is great, the Promise is great, but then with the Promise, it pays for tuition and fees; so living in Kalamazoo you might go to KVCC instead of Michigan or Michigan State because room and board is \$10,000 a year.”* (Second Baptist Church)

*“One of the biggest issues that I saw was that KVCC was forced to become a remedial education source because there were children coming out of the Kalamazoo Promise that were not prepared to go to college but ‘I’m going because I got the Promise.’ And they arrive at KVCC, totally unprepared, KVCC becomes a remedial education center and those kids don’t finish.”* (Edison Neighborhood)

**Housing, Community Safety and Transportation**

**Neighborhood Conditions**

Residents in Edison feel safe in their neighborhoods. Residents in the Eastside, Kalamazoo Village Apartments and at Second Baptist report feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods, at least at night. To some extent, all residents feel there is a lack of affordable, safe housing in Kalamazoo.

Specifically they describe the condition of their neighborhood as:

- Affordable housing = unsafe housing
- Neighborhood is good – friendly, people keep houses/yards up
- Police harass residents rather than protect
- Poor streets and sidewalks – in need of repair
- Streets need more lighting
- Too much trash on the ground

**Direct Statements from Focus Groups:**

*“I mean the neighborhood looks pretty good. I mean the houses are decent and mainly people try to keep their yard up, but it’s okay.”* (Eastside Neighborhood)

*“[People have high rents for small spaces because] that’s all that’s available or that’s all that will take them without a passing credit check, without a job, without a sign-able deposit, first and last month’s deposit, that type of thing.”* (Second Baptist Church)

*“I don’t know if they just throw it down on the ground or on the playground, he’s [son] one and a half and I try to take him to the playground when he comes, but there’s smashed pop bottles, papers, just stuff all over, you know, and he’s like, he’s wanting to pick it up and I’m like, ‘No!, No!, No!’” (Village of Kalamazoo Apartments)*

Residents would like to see the following changed about their neighborhood:

- Better relationships with the police who are working in the neighborhood
- Enforcement of curfew and increased policing
- Less fighting, police getting a handle on the guns/violence
- More activities for youth including a place to congregate
- More activities for middle-aged people living on the north side of Kalamazoo
- More housing opportunities for low income families or homeless residents
- More public events/activities
- Pick up the trash in the neighborhood/parks and have residents bag trash correctly

**Direct Statements from Focus Groups:**

*“I would like for the fighting to be stopped, get improved on that and just guns shooting. I wish they could get a handle on that. That would be a blessing if that could be improved. Every other, two days or so you hear something, somebody shooting [a gun] in the air.” (Eastside Neighborhood)*

*“There are not enough places for interacting stuff like that. Positive interaction around town, you know... There’s nothing to do, no one has anything to do. There’s nothing to do but get into trouble and it’s all this trouble waiting to happen you know. Eventually it’s going to find you. You’re sitting here just doing nothing eventually somebody will come by...I got nothing else to do.” (Bronson Park)*

*“It’s lots of people just hanging out on corners and you know and that’s just, that’s not, I don’t feel safe. Two weeks ago, a family, these people over down here in this neighborhood on the corner house, got into a fight, went over to someone’s house and got in a fight with their daughter, then their whole family came over here five cars deep and got in a fight with them. And then, a couple people went to jail that day.” (Eastside Neighborhood)*

*“People are not at school or these people don’t have a place to live so they got to do dirty work. So they go off and take the chance of robbing somebody because they got to feed their family. The baby crying, they got to feed the baby. What else they going to do?” (Bronson Park)*

*“Years ago, the police officers were the coaches for the football and the baseball teams that we had, so our kids got to know them when they were young as somebody other than the police, you know, this is Coach So-and-so. And as the kids grew up, the police knew them. But now there’s no getting to know anybody.” (Second Baptist Church)*

*“I mean you’ve got some officers that think all kids are bad, and I can only speak for myself, but I’ve got that building right on the end on the corner you know and I see those little kids, they watch the building. I give them Gatorades every Friday to watch the building. I had a pad; you know the pad that the police use, the little memo pad. And he said, ‘Are you going to take me to jail?’ And I’m like, ‘I’m not even a flippin’ cop.’ And he said, ‘Well, every time they come up, that means they are going to jail.’ (Edison Neighborhood)*

### **Options for Affordable and Safe Housing**

All except three residents across all groups feel there is a lack of affordable and safe housing in Kalamazoo, especially for homeless residents, low-income residents, or residents with an arrest in their past. With so many decisions involved in this process, many feel they need more support in understanding available opportunities and support services.

They feel:

- Affordable housing often requires having a car
- Dilapidated houses should be torn down
- Finding affordable housing is time consuming
- More should be done with land bank property
- Move-in costs are prohibitive (two months’ rent and deposit)
- People need support/advocacy in obtaining affordable housing
- Program should be created where homeless fix up buildings/houses for themselves or other families in need
- Waiting lists too long for affordable/subsidized housing

### **Direct Statements from Focus Groups:**

*“You can’t afford it. You just have to stay with someone else, a friend, a family member, and then you aren’t considered homeless because you are living with a friend or family member, so therefore DHS or housing resources, people like that won’t help you, because you have a roof over your head. And housing resources, my only complaint about them is that they give you the list, which is supposed to be affordable housing. Well there is affordable housing and there is subsidized housing – it’s two different things, but they are all on the same list. They won’t help you find a place to live, you have to find it and get it approved yourself and then they will help you. Well, if I could find it myself, I wouldn’t be here trying to ask you for help.” (Village of Kalamazoo Apartments)*

*“They are in the homeless population with years of experience that they could just say okay we got funding, let’s get these houses up and running, start making low income housing for these people.” (Bronson Park)*

*“I’d like to see the county do something with all that property that they have in the county land bank.” (Second Baptist Church)*

*“The thing about Kalamazoo is that a lot of the affordable housing does require that you have a car if you want to go out to the grocery store. It’s not like you can have an apartment downtown. I think the apartments downtown are not affordable here. Even if you live in an apartment downtown, really there is no food within walking distance down here. You still have to drive out....can you have affordable housing without a car here?” (Rotaract)*

The question of whether or not one could obtain a home loan if wanting to purchase a home was not asked of the Bronson Park participants. While most in the Second Baptist Church and Rotaract groups felt confident they could obtain a home loan, the Eastside Neighborhood, Village of Kalamazoo Apartments, and Edison Neighborhood resident said they would not be confident, due to problems with credit. Others voiced concerns about the risks of alternative funding sources.

#### **Direct Statements from Focus Groups:**

*“I still feel that in some ways that Edison is kind of red lined. Banks are still finding it difficult to loan money to people who want to buy houses in the neighborhood. My residents are resilient so they are finding alternative ways to pay for their houses. Because housing stock is really reasonably priced, I won’t say it’s expensive; it’s pretty cheap to live here. If you have \$29,000-\$30,000 dollars in your pocket, you can buy a house just about anywhere here. But getting that loan to buy the house is very difficult.” (Edison Neighborhood)*

*“Land contracts, but they are very risky. I’ve seen land contracts come across my desk that are not worth the paper they are written on, but that person has been paying the land contract every month for the last 15, 20 years.” (Edison Neighborhood)*

#### **Reliable Transportation**

The Eastside, Village of Kalamazoo Apartments, Second Baptist Church, and Bronson Park groups all had participants within them that struggle with obtaining reliable transportation, even those that own their own cars. If in need, most participants either take the bus or have a friend or family member drive them to where they need to go. Some discussion focused on the bus system’s limited routes and time schedule as well as the inability to use the bus very effectively for one’s grocery shopping. All agree that taxicabs are a last alternative due to their cost, although this is what many have resorted to in order to bring home their groceries.

### **Direct Statements from Focus Groups:**

*“Pay people. Pay people to take me where I want to go, like I had to pay to get back and forth to work. ... because the bus don’t run out there. Other than that, I would have jumped on the bus. But the bus don’t go out to my job.”* (Eastside Neighborhood)

*“I had a car up until a few months ago, so that wasn’t an issue for me. Now I just navigate the bus system, or I have family that lives on this side of town. I have a cousin that lives right around the corner. She comes from the east side. It just depends, but I have some ways.”* (Village of Kalamazoo Apartments)

## **Employment Security and Financial Resources & Employment Opportunity**

### **Income**

Participants in all groups have experienced problems with “making ends meet,” particularly when unforeseen costs and expenses arise. Most residents also stress that it is difficult to find employment, there is a lack of awareness about budgeting as well as available resources, and that DHS is hard to navigate and slow to respond to one’s needs. The Bronson Park residents specifically identify the lack of personal hygiene products available to the homeless.

Other comments regarding the barriers to covering one’s costs include:

- Food costs
- Health costs
- Knowledge about stretching resources
- Lack of reliable transportation
- Poor credit scores
- Predatory lending/retail establishments
- Unforeseen bills/expenses
- Utility costs

### **Direct Statements from Focus Groups:**

*“You know, sometimes you take your child to the doctor and then there that’s \$150 Rx bill on top of that \$100 [visit]; there’s \$250 out of my budget. Do I take it out of the rent? Do I take it out of the utilities? How am I going to make it up? Put it on a credit card and then try to figure out how to pay back, back then, that 20% interest. So it’s a struggle, but you still take your baby to the doctor because that has to happen.”* (Edison Neighborhood)

*“It’s not a good way to put it, but you’ve got predatory retail establishments. We’ve got two Rent-A-Centers here in the neighborhood. Never seen their windows dirty or their store closed or anything. Their trucks are always spic and span because they are preying on the less fortunate and again that’s life skills.”* (Edison Neighborhood)

*“Food is expensive. It didn’t used to be like this either. And there is a level of folks back in the day who would plant their own vegetable gardens and they do some of that here but there isn’t as much knowledge about how to grow your own food and to stretch your resources and that kind of stuff, and utilities, because we live in these big old monster houses; they are expensive to heat and a lot of them aren’t insulated.”* (Edison Neighborhood)

*“I’m just making it; that’s all I am is just making it. If I had to get to the dentist, it’s gonna take out more money from the gas, you know for the gas, for that week or, however I do it. I usually just like to fill it up but it costs \$45 to fill my tank up. And it don’t really last when you’re driving around town and you have all these errands to run, it just goes so fast.”* (Eastside Neighborhood)

*“Even with the, just the ability to pay your bills, I feel the mindset for the ability of the education of the managing your money and budgeting a lot of people doesn’t have that knowledge or skill to know how to budget that money.”* (Second Baptist Church)

*“It’s just trying to get back out there in the work force. That’s of course the biggest issue. Once you get something, if you even have some income coming in, then it’s trying to make what you have stretch to cover all the bases. You know, your rent, the food, hello you have children, they have to be clothed, all types of things.”* (Village of Kalamazoo Apartments)

*“Just navigating the DHS system. Just came from there, and you are right, things have changed! Everything is online and so just trying to [access] those resources. And they have waiting periods for them so then you have to wait for them to process your application. So in the meantime, ‘Okay, what do I do for food? I have to try to find food banks; I have to try to find this or that.’ So it is a struggle. If you don’t have employment, what do you do?”* (Village of Kalamazoo Apartments)

## **Employment**

Residents in all groups feel that it is difficult to find a self-sustaining job in Kalamazoo. Some felt that finding a low skill job earning a low wage is obtainable but residents struggle to “make ends meet.” Residents felt that many better paying jobs require a specific skill set, a number of years of experience, or a personal connection. Additionally, while residents think job fairs are helpful, many find out about them at the last minute and cannot attend due to transportation, scheduling, or other barriers.

Specifically, they note that:

- Criminal records limit employment options
- Employment fairs are helpful
- Difficult to find a job paying a “living wage”
- Harder to meet a potential employer due to online resume submission
- Have to compete with college students for jobs
- Is difficult when you lack personal connections

- Lack of Internet access is a barrier
- Lack of timely notification about job fairs (more often is word of mouth)
- Many jobs require a college degree
- Many jobs require specific training or experience
- MI Works! Job database is good resource but time limits on computers prevent thorough search for employment
- Some have had good luck with temp agencies
- There are many resources (Mt. Zion, Galilee, Christian Life Center) but need to know about them first
- Too many incentives not to work (e.g., lose food stamps, SSI, TANF)

***Direct Statements from Focus Groups:***

*“If you don’t have Internet access then that creates a whole other [barrier]. You need to find the nearest library or use a friend’s computer or something like that. Go where you have to go, do what you have to do. I don’t know about anybody else, but when I hear about the job fairs, unfortunately, it’s like that day.”* (Village of Kalamazoo Apartments)

*“This place sucks for anybody that has felonies because, there’s not enough jobs, like he said, because there’s only so many openings that they can hire only so many felons. So, they get them full, even fast food places don’t even want to hire felons no more. It’s ridiculous.”* (Bronson Park)

*“I’ve learned here in Kalamazoo it’s such a vast gulf between the haves and the have-nots and so therefore the same way with employment. You have to have [an] excellent resume or skills in order to acquire some of these jobs in this income.”* (Second Baptist Church)

*“I got to compete against college kids who get paid \$8 an hour. They do take a lot of work away from people like me. You know, we got plenty of skilled workers amongst the homeless population.”* (Bronson Park)

*“It’s like you have to intern for free for two years just to get a job.”* (Rotaract)

*“Connections are a hard thing to do if you are poor. Finding connections. Because you don’t have the connections to the wealthy; they live in their own little blocked off bubble, you know that gate at the beginning of Portage kind of thing...or the wall.”* (Edison Neighborhood)

*“The question should be can they get a job that will sustain them? Plenty of openings at McDonald’s.”* (Edison Neighborhood)

*“You are talking about capability and you don’t necessarily have to have the diploma to get the capability. But there are so many jobs now where there are so many people looking for jobs that they have upped the requirements, so now you have to have a degree.”* (Edison Neighborhood)

While many residents can identify some good resources to turn to for job skills training, as a group they clearly express the need to have more resources available as well as make them more known to individuals in need.

Specifically they cite:

- Difficult to afford pay back on student loans
- Existing training/employment opportunities need more visibility in the community
- Free vocational programs would be utilized
- More difficult for African Americans to find employment
- Many services are helpful such as:
  - Goodwill
  - JET Program
  - KVCC
  - MIWorks!
  - WorkFirst
- Need GED
- Need more employment training opportunities
- Need more hands-on training opportunities
- No visible resources for training or skill advancement
- Vacillating government programs make completion difficult

#### **Direct Statements from Focus Groups:**

*“If you don’t have any skills, what are you going to put on your resume? And with all these kids that are walking around in the streets that don’t have anywhere to go or that don’t have any skills, what are they going to put on their resume?”* (Second Baptist Church)

*“I have graduated from Everest with a medical administrator degree and I have had so many interviews but the number one thing that is holding me back is I have not had that hands on [experience] and actually doing. It’s not really so much of skills but how much experience you’ve had. You can have two, three degrees and if you don’t have the experience it’s like you’re not getting anywhere.”* (Second Baptist Church)

*“So many times it’s this person will start a program or this government entity will start a program that’s supposed to train you how to do job X and then half way through, a new person moves into that department or political realm so that program gets cut and those folks are out on their own and then the new program gets started that will teach you how to be a nurse and you get halfway through that nursing program, which these folks are doing the work, and then that one gets pulled and they are on to another politician who thinks the answer to poverty is to teach people how to be bridge builders. We’ve heard that one.”* (Edison Neighborhood)

*“The flip side of that is there may be programs, but the people don’t know about them and don’t know what they do for them so you have to have both. We don’t have enough programs; we don’t have people who understand that they need the programs.” (Edison Neighborhood)*

*“And nothing in life is free too. Everything comes at a price and a lot folks think that in the neighborhood too. There is always a cost and what do I have to do to get this?” (Edison Neighborhood)*

## **Public Benefits**

Residents mention the use of public benefits throughout the focus groups. All agree that the system is often difficult to navigate as programs often change but a helpful caseworker can ease this stress.

Specifically they note that:

- Caseworkers are overloaded
- Food Stamps process happens quickly for some
- Getting benefits for disability was hard in beginning
- Michigan Path program (job search for gas card) is helpful
- Services are not centralized, which results in running between offices
- System not designed to get people out of the system

## **Direct Statements from Focus Groups:**

*“The system is not designed to get you out. There is no education component except how to keep all of these balls juggling in the air.” (Edison Neighborhood)*

*“It is terrible. And once you get it figured out, because I do a lot of that daily, trying to help folks find resources for housing issues, and food issues, and what have you and once you get that system figured out, somebody takes that hat and shakes it up and changes the whole system. So even me, I’m constantly going, ‘Oh that program doesn’t exist, but, this organization took over that program and this organization does this,’ and sometimes 211 is worthless because everyone is sending them back to my office. Well, I have the resource. Well, I have no money in my office but trying to find programs to fit the people, it’s like that little cup and ball game.” (Edison Neighborhood)*

*“I’m a single man; I can’t get any help from DHS at all. They’re like ‘Oh you’re not working 20 hours no more?’ So they cut everything off. I can’t get any food stamps. I can’t get any medical care. I can’t get anything. And I’m like, ‘Hold up, I ain’t got no kids.’ So I gotta have kids just to get something.” (Bronson Park)*

*“It’s like a 50/50. You either got a chance of getting help even with kids, or a chance of not. It’s all on depending on what type of worker, and then, like what me and him were saying with the felony thing.” (Bronson Park)*

*“For the most part I don’t even want to deal with DHS period. For one, I think they are very demeaning to people. (Group agreement.) Just because you may not have an income at that time or a low income, it does not make me any less of a person than you are, just because you are sitting behind that desk and you have a job. You know, to me, when they talk to you on the phone, that’s how they make you feel.” (Village of Kalamazoo Apartments)*

## **Medical and Health**

### **Access**

Residents in the Bronson Park, Edison Neighborhood, Village of Kalamazoo Apartments, Eastside Neighborhood, and Rotaract all feel it is not easy to see a doctor or a dentist when needed, while a majority of residents from the Second Baptist Church group say they have insurance and therefore access to a doctor, but that it usually takes at least 30 days to schedule an appointment. Many residents across groups have used the emergency room for medical attention. The majority also feel it is much more difficult to see a dentist than a physician when needed.

Barriers to medical and dental attention when needed are identified as:

- Being “red flagged” by the hospital for over-use of emergency services
- Cost for preventative care
- Cost of emergency room use
- Dental work very expensive, even with insurance
- Discrepancy in treatment for insured vs. uninsured
- Visits planned strategically until deductible is met
- Fear of dental work
- Free clinics difficult due to long walk-in service wait time
- Lack of private insurance or Medicaid
- Lack of transportation
- Length of time to schedule appointment - especially new patients
- Many doctors do not accept Medicaid
- Dental care by clinic resources involve pulling teeth
- Stereotyping by emergency room doctors and misdiagnosis

Additionally, all residents except for those in the Village of Kalamazoo Apartments say cost has prevented them from going to see a doctor or filling a prescription at some point in their lives, although many utilize discount programs at stores such as Walmart, programs they access through their personal physician, the Family Health Center, and the Healthcare for the Homeless program.

### **Direct Statements from Focus Groups:**

*“Most of them you have to go to South Haven or someplace way over that way in order to get dental care. I only know that because of my niece. The kids, they have to take them way over somewhere in order to see a dentist. No place here in town who takes the Medicaid.”* (Village of Kalamazoo Apartments)

*“I took my son the day that they had a walk-in clinic and we waited all day because it was like first come first serve, so he waited. We was there from seven to three and he still wasn’t seen. So eventually I had to take him to an emergency room and they didn’t do anything there. So he was in pain and then I had to get the social service people.”* (Second Baptist Church)

*“There are manufacturers out there that will give you, depending on your situation, they’ll give you the medication that you need free of charge but that’s not out there a lot unless the doctor tells you that and gives you the paper to fill out, then you aren’t aware of that.”* (Village of Kalamazoo Apartments)

*“I make appointments. And keep my appointments. And then if it’s an emergency I just go to the emergency room.”* (Eastside Neighborhood)

*“Well we are retired and we have [a] GM plan and so it’s excellent. But we still have big co-pays, deductibles and co-insurances and we don’t know how they think we’re supposed to pay those but in reference to dental care it does pay well and it has preventative teeth cleaning.”* (Second Baptist Church)

*“Now when I go to the ER they kick me out because I’ve been there too many times. I have Medicaid but I have a family doctor in the area that’s hard [to schedule with] so I just go to the ER every time I need something and then they kick you out because you’ve been to the ER too many times.”* (Bronson Park)

*“It takes so long to get an appointment. Like it could have been urgent care but it takes so long, it takes about two months just to get an appointment. And when you do go, you sit there and wait for like three hours before they even call your name, then you get back there and you wait another hour or so for the people to even come to see you.”* (Second Baptist Church)

*“When black people come into the emergency room, and complain about having pain, there is a stereotype that falls right on them, that they are only there trying to get drugs that they are abusers, that they are only in there so that they can get pain medication for their habit.”* (Second Baptist Church)

## **Access to Healthy Food**

Residents are mixed in their response to whether or not they have access to healthy food. Many feel there are limited options to fresh food in the downtown area. Most are in agreement that food banks and other resources are available and provide food to those in need yet often lack fresh produce. The Farmers’ Market is also identified as a good resource for healthy food. Overall, however, there is consensus that there is a lack of healthy options due to the lack of

affordable grocery stores that carry quality produce, the high cost of healthy food, and a lack of transportation to an affordable grocery store (e.g., Walmart, Meijer). Additionally, while some residents in nearly all of the groups had either run out of food before or know someone who has, they then use the available food pantries as resources to help them get food for themselves. Some residents feel there are enough resources to prevent families from going hungry but some choose not to take advantage of these resources.

#### **Direct Statements from Focus Groups:**

*“There is no reason to go hunger. But I think a lot of time, again, it’s that pride and fear, fear that you are going to appear to be not as good of a parent if you have to stand in that line and get food or handouts.”* (Edison Neighborhood)

*“I think it would be very difficult without a car. I think in the rural communities around Kalamazoo too, I grew up in Schoolcraft and the price of the produce in Hardings in Schoolcraft is almost double what it is at Meijer which is only about 12 miles away but if you don’t have a car, or your car is broke down, or if you don’t have time.”* (Rotaract)

*“When it’s a two-hour bus trip, basically, to get out to Meijer, you don’t want to just buy a bunch of fresh produce that is going to go bad in a week.”* (Rotaract)

*“People say, ‘A head of lettuce for two bucks? I can get a whole pizza for five’ But what they don’t understand is that the quality and everything matters.”* (Edison Neighborhood)

*“People do make choices about what they eat but a lot of times you’re in a position where the choice is already made for you. If you don’t have the transportation to try to do something different, even if the thought came to your mind to try to do something different, you don’t have access to it.”* (Second Baptist Church)

*“I have four kids and you end up spending on the cab let alone \$15, something you could have been spending on food, for the kids.”* (Bronson Park)

*“Healthy options are expensive. You just have to buy the basics because like for food stamps, I get \$164 a month is what I get for me, and that’s still not enough. I mean if you average it out, if you divide that by 30 or 31 days, what do you got? Four dollars a day to eat on? It just doesn’t keep up with the cost of food.”* (Village of Kalamazoo Apartments)

*“McDonald’s got dollar meals and that’s what everybody wants to eat. But like the healthy foods you buy, the apples and stuff, stuff that’s good for you, it cost a lot more than all this other bad stuff that they’re trying to feed us.”* (Bronson Park)

*“In the summertime you have the Farmers’ Market, which right now is going on at Douglas today three to six. They have a little small Farmers’ Market that they have down in Douglas. This is something that they’ve started doing.”* (Second Baptist Church)

*“There’re five Dollar Stores and that’s where people of lower income do all of their shopping and I mean you put five of those type of stores in a one mile radius, what do you expect? They’re eating box food.”* (Second Baptist Church)

### Additional Comments

When asked if residents had anything else they would like to mention about living in their community, most residents had additional concerns they did not voice in the group.

Residents highlighted that:

- Felons are treated like second-class citizens
- More advertisement of food banks is needed
- More attention needs to be paid to children with special needs
- Neighborhoods have too much drug activity
- New people from other areas are causing problems
- Parks are not clean or safe for children
- Public schools need more support and parent involvement

### **Direct Statements from Focus Groups:**

*“Where I live you walk down the street and smell nothing but pot. And I have a ten, nine, six and a five year old. Not the greatest place to raise children. You can walk down the street and get weed from anybody, or crack, or whatever.”* (Bronson Park)

*“We got people moving here from Detroit trying to stand on the corners and sell dope and trying to start shoot-off with people already living here on the Eastside. I’m like ‘Y’all need to go back home, go back to Chicago, go back to Detroit, cause we didn’t have all this here.’ This is ridiculous.”* (Eastside Neighborhood)

*“Parents need to get involved because parents know their kids better than the counselors and everybody else. You can’t allow a counselor to put the kid in chemistry, calculus, a science class, animal physiology, high level content, with also reading at a third grade level in high school. They ain’t gonna make it.”* (Second Baptist Church)

*“A lot of times it’s not about them, they’re not ADHD, they’re smart kids but we’re dealing with the North side; some of these kids have home life problems. Sometimes there’s not a parent right there, because the parent is off working during second shift, so they don’t have anybody there to make them do their homework, to give them a role model. And that affects the thinking of the kids too. Then when they go to school, they’re tired, because no one’s there to make them go to bed at the proper time and then the school labels them as ‘troublemakers,’ ‘ADHD’ or things like that. So they react at school, so then they’re being kicked out.”* (Second Baptist Church)

Additionally, one resident from the Edison neighborhood wanted to highlight their community's assets while another proposed a solution for increased economic prosperity in the area.

#### **Direct Statements from Focus Groups:**

*"I don't want you to think that we are just desperate or despaired. We have a lot of wonderful amenities in this neighborhood. We have a swimming pool, we have a skate park, we have parks, the Farmers' Market, Bank Street, the library, the resources and the really good places go on and on forever." (Edison Neighborhood)*

*"My proposal is that we need to get [the business, higher Ed, and medical school] people to invest in the neighborhood. And since Western Michigan is now building a medical school and since KVCC is now building a new campus, my thing to them is, "Okay, we are thrilled you are doing this. You need to invest in the neighborhood. Either you are investing by employing the residents in the neighborhood—and not employing them at minimum wage either—so they can pull themselves up. Or, you need to start thinking about why don't we buy some of the houses in the neighborhood and refurbish them." (Edison Neighborhood)*

## **D. Focus Group Summary and Conclusion**

While the educational opportunities of the Kalamazoo Promise and the availability of local institutions of higher education (e.g., KVCC, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo College) are seen as positives for the Kalamazoo community, many focus group participants see themselves or individuals they know who are unable to take advantage of these educational opportunities due to a lack of affordability, a lack of attention paid to struggling children, and a lack of parental resources to support their children within the public school system.

Along with the rising cost of education, residents are most concerned with the affordability of health care, lack of affordable and safe housing, neighborhood drug use and violence, and a lack of employment opportunities—especially if one has a felony record. While many feel the Kalamazoo Promise positively impacts the community, residents feel the schools need more funding to adequately address student needs and that more "soft skills" (e.g., timeliness, respect) need to be included in the curriculum. An unsupportive home environment, bullying, negative influence of peer groups, and "pushing" unprepared students through the high school process lead to a lack of on-time student graduation as well as lack of college attendance.

To some extent, all residents felt there was a lack of affordable, safe housing in Kalamazoo and number of people did not feel entirely safe in their neighborhood—specifically during the nighttime. Residents would like to see more clean-ups and repairs to their neighborhoods and parks, more affordable and safe housing opportunities, a better working

relationship with the police that patrol the neighborhood, and more safe activities available to neighborhood youth. Most feel more support could be provided in helping residents obtain housing as the waiting list for housing is long and the cost of initial move-in fees is high.

Some individuals across all focus groups struggle with a lack of reliable transportation. Those that face this issue usually solve their problem by using a bus, paying a friend for transportation, or traveling by taxi. Participants in all groups reported experiencing problems with “making ends meet,” particularly when unforeseen costs and expenses arise such as utility bills or health care costs. Many individuals feel that employment is extremely hard to come by in the Kalamazoo Community, as many positions require specific skills or a college degree. While many were able to cite available resources to help with job training as well as finding employment, there is general agreement that more resources are needed and those that currently exist, need more visibility.

Lastly, a major concern for most focus group participants was barriers to health care. A majority of participants, including many who have health insurance, face multiple hurdles that prevent them from seeing a physician or dentist when needed. Specifically, at least two focus groups independently mentioned each of the following hurdles: transportation, out-of-pocket costs, long wait times, and the lack of available physicians accepting Medicaid within the community. A number of participants reported waiting months to see a doctor and having to make special trips, sometimes over an hour out of town (one-way) to find doctors who would accept Medicaid. With respect to accessible healthy food options, while most are in agreement that food banks and other resources are available and provide some types of food to those in need, there were a number of participants who commented that these options often lack fresh produce, and focus on foods that store well on a shelf, which often are not the most nutritious. There was also a high degree of consensus that there is a lack of healthy food options in many neighborhoods. Barriers to these healthy food options that were offered by the participants include a lack of affordable grocery stores that carry quality produce located downtown, the high cost of healthy food, and a lack of transportation to an affordable grocery store such as Walmart, Meijer, which are located further away from urban areas, but which allow one to stretch their food budget further.

## Overall Needs Summary & Recommendations

### Health

For most families, health care costs are the single most expensive component of satisfying their basic needs. The number of low income families has increased over recent years, with one in five in Kalamazoo County receiving food assistance. And many participants in the focus groups commented how people must make choices between paying for prescriptions/medical bills, and paying for other basic needs such as rent or childcare. Additionally, for people with low incomes who qualify for Medicaid, finding a medical home can be a struggle. Many focus group participants also reported having to travel to neighboring towns or deal with long wait periods to get the medical attention that they need, or else face going to the emergency room to meet their more urgent health care needs.

Therefore, efforts to help offset some of the costs for health insurance, preventative medical expenses, such as co-payments or prescriptions, would help to further remove these barriers toward self-sufficiency. Additionally, efforts to help people identify more primary care services that will accept Medicaid within Kalamazoo County, and within the City of Kalamazoo specifically, would also help to reduce the waiting times and transportation barriers to health care. Partnerships with the new medical school at Western Michigan University may be one possible route to increasing access to doctors in the local area. Support systems that help people to navigate primary care options in their area would also help to further implement such programs and promote better awareness and utilization of resources.

Another important component of health is diet and nutritious food options. For those who struggle to earn enough to cover some basic needs, such as food, the option of purchasing fresh produce or other more nutritious food options becomes less economically viable. This fact was reiterated in many of the focus groups, along with concern over few options for purchasing such food from grocers and markets in their neighborhood. Some state programs are already rolling out to allow food assistance funds to purchase fresh produce from farmer's markets; however, efforts to support and promote further awareness and utilization of this option could help to make healthy choices more economically viable for as many as one in five families who receive food assistance. Furthermore, partnerships, funds, or logistical efforts to help get fresh food transported to local grocers and/or food pantries, may also help to make healthy food options more accessible to those in need, especially those with limited transportation options.

### Housing Insecurity

Among basic needs, health care may be the most expensive, but housing security may be the most fundamental of basic needs. Housing security entails safe and affordable housing options, without which a family's health and well-being are far more tentative. In their efforts to

satisfy housing needs, families must also contend with the cost of utilities, home maintenance, and safety in the neighborhood. Both the data on homelessness numbers increasing, the considerably lower number of new homes being built, and the rising costs of homeownership suggest that this basic need is falling out of reach for more people in Kalamazoo County. Additionally, focus group data also expressed concern with finding adequate rental options and with concerns for safety in the neighborhood, ranging from crime, to the condition of sidewalks and lighting at night.

Therefore, efforts to help the homeless establish or find housing could make a major contribution to the health and well-being of this population. Providing assistance for others who are housing insecure, to find and finance rental options, would also be of great help, whether it is through placement services, or directly providing funds to assist with rent or initial fees for renting (e.g., down payment/last month's rent, etc.). To help ease the expense of maintaining a home or for paying for utilities, funds should continue to be provided to make efficiency updates or home improvements, and greater promotion and navigation to such services would help reach those in need. Similarly, assistance to help cover seasonal spikes in utility expenses and greater promotion of such services in areas of high need would also help families meet their basic needs. Lastly, efforts to support or advocate for sidewalk improvements, more street lights in needed places, and to promote better public and police relations, could go a long way toward making more safe homes in impoverished neighborhoods.

## **Transportation**

Another important contributor to self-sufficiency is transportation. As illustrated in the appended maps (see map 24), over 30% of households in the Northside and northern Edison neighborhoods have no available vehicles. Likewise, a number of focus groups discussed the need for reliable transportation for work, appointments, and grocery shopping. While other services like DHS may handle funds to fix, purchase, and/or maintain a vehicle, and other funds may be available to provide free bus use for those in need, the action agency could help to coordinate people to these services, or could partner with others to extend transportation options further, such as for those who work after-hour shifts for which no bus is available, or for those who want to purchase groceries but have difficulty transporting such items on the bus. And, as alluded to above, the action agency may be able to reduce the need for transportation by bringing more scarce options such as health care providers and nutritious food options into the neighborhoods where the needs are greatest.

## **Employment & Education**

A living wage income is crucial for a family or household to be self-sufficient and to meet their basic needs. Several indicators suggest that well-paying employment options in Kalamazoo County have gone down over time and that jobs are transitioning away from traditionally large sectors, like manufacturing, into new sectors of growth such as the health care

field. Similarly, a number of people in the focus group section discussed the reduced options for well-paying low skilled jobs, or spoke of a disconnect between the degree and training received from Institutions of higher education and the skills that employers are seeking. Therefore the need for retraining and seeking education in high growth sectors that pay good jobs is great, as is the need for greater coordination between employers and educators regarding skills training.

The community action agency could partner with the local higher education areas to provide expense accounts to help with new career training and the attainment of certificates and bachelor's degrees. And coordination with existing employment agencies in the area, such as Michigan Works and Manpower could also help to more effectively place people in jobs that help set them on the path toward self-sufficiency. The action agency may also serve as an advocate for greater communication and coordination between employers and institutions of higher education so that training and education come within greater alignment with the skills those employers are seeking in their workforce.

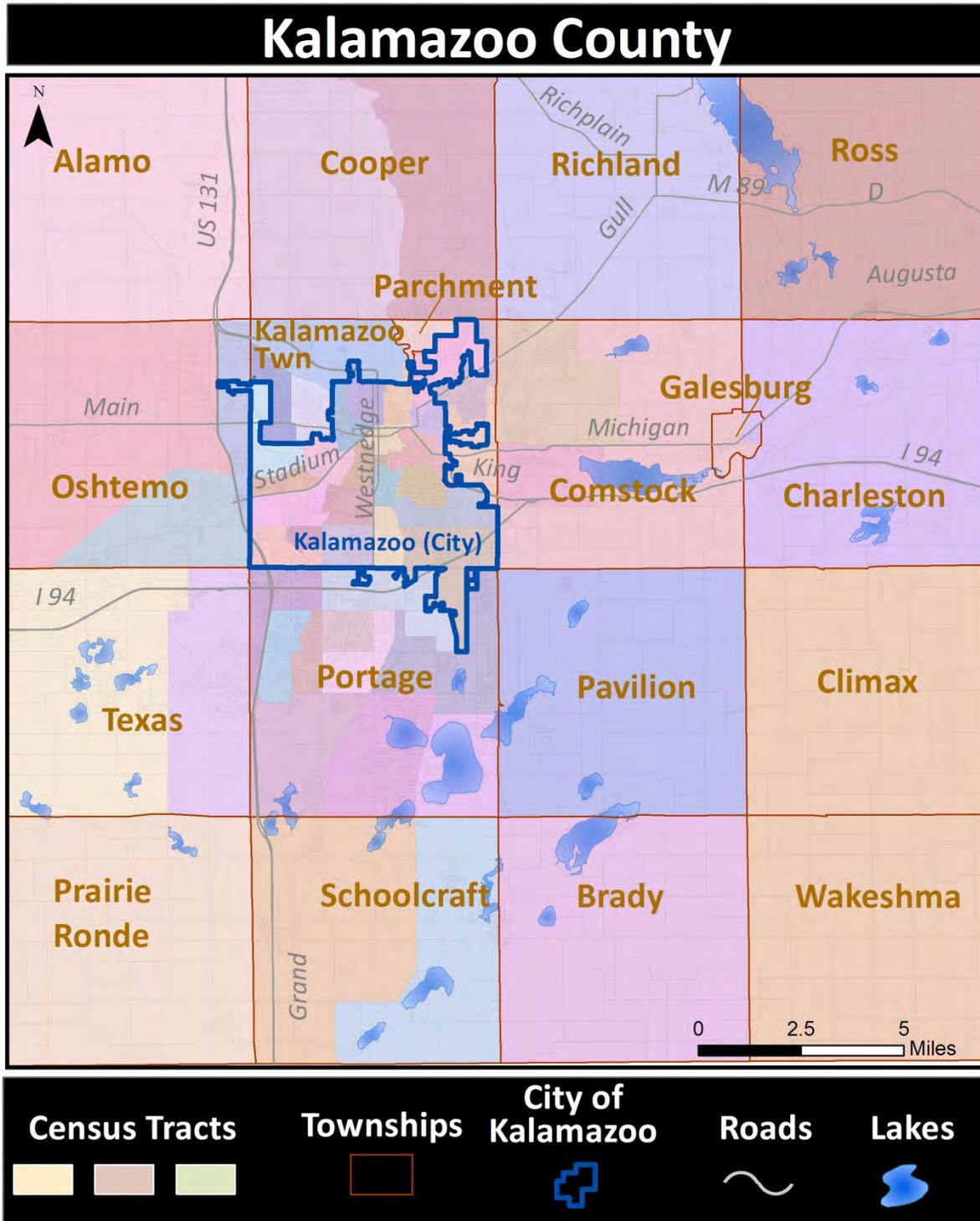
Lastly, child care costs were the second highest basic needs expense for most families. With respect to early education, funds to help parents place children in educational child care settings and/or to boost the curriculum of child care settings can help to better prepare at-risk children for success in the early years of education, and increase the likelihood that these children will graduate from high school down the road. While resources are available for very low income households via Head Start and Michigan's Early-on programs, many working-class families with young children still struggle to afford this basic need, but do not qualify for programs as their income level rests above the very low or impoverished thresholds. The action agency may be able to coordinate with these other agencies to provide funding to families with marginally adequate incomes, but who may nonetheless struggle to afford the basic need of child care.

## Appendix

### List of Maps

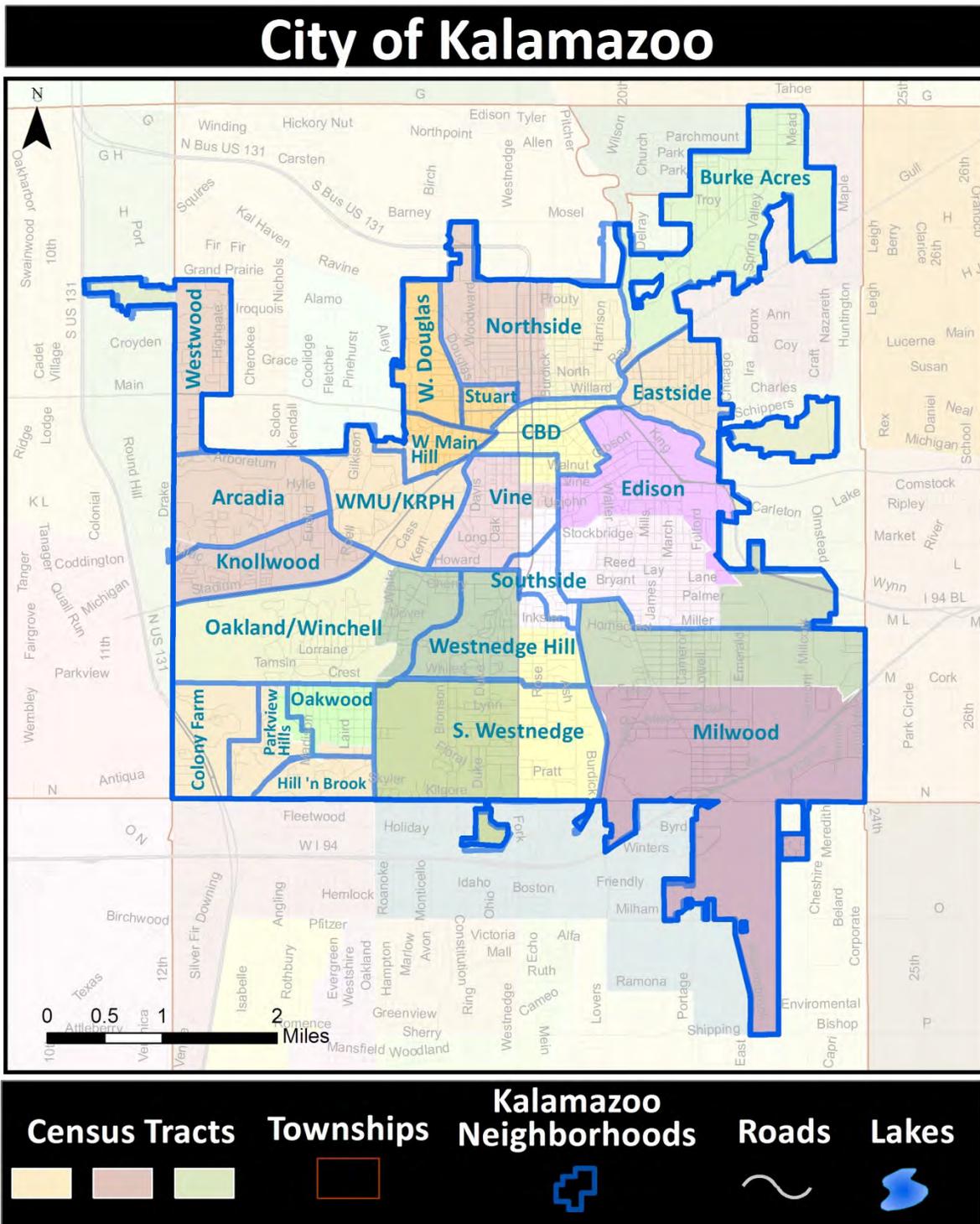
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Map 1 – Kalamazoo County Map



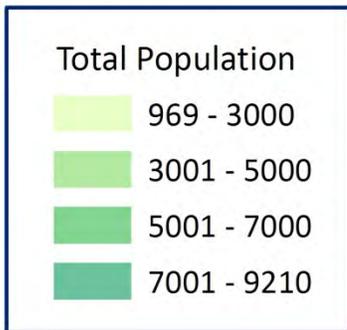
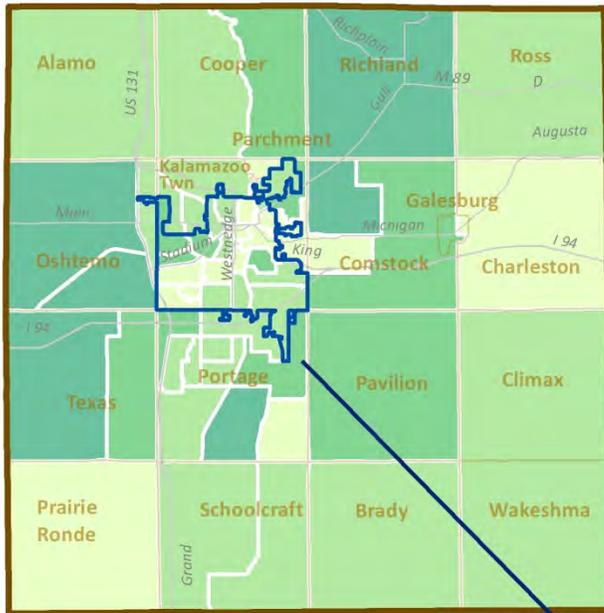
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Map 2 – City of Kalamazoo Map

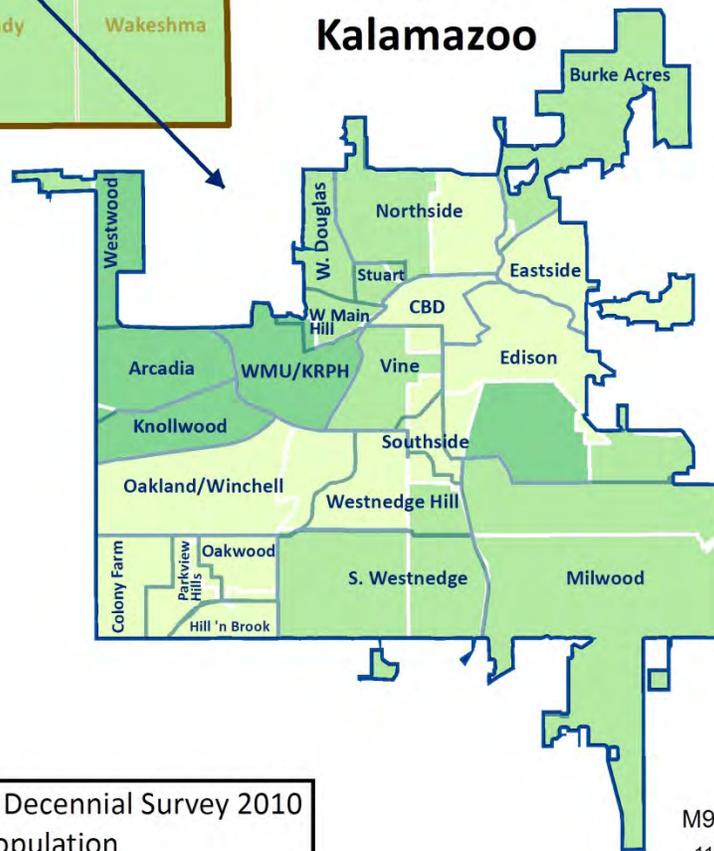


# Distribution of Total Population

## Kalamazoo County



## City of Kalamazoo

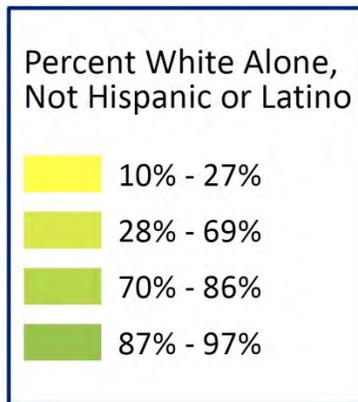


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Survey 2010  
 Variable: HD01\_S001, Total Population

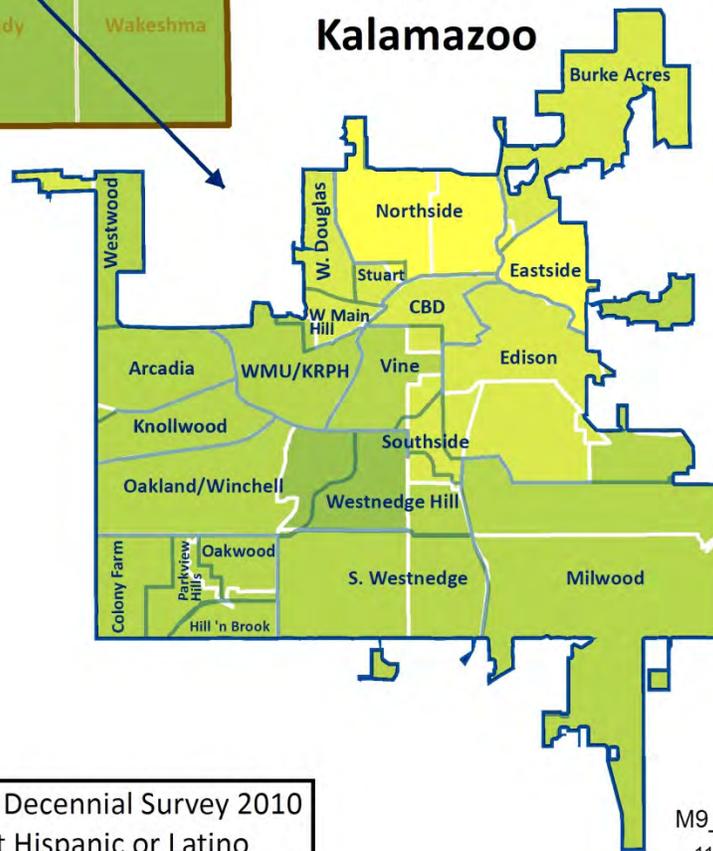
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## Distribution of White Population

### Kalamazoo County



### City of Kalamazoo

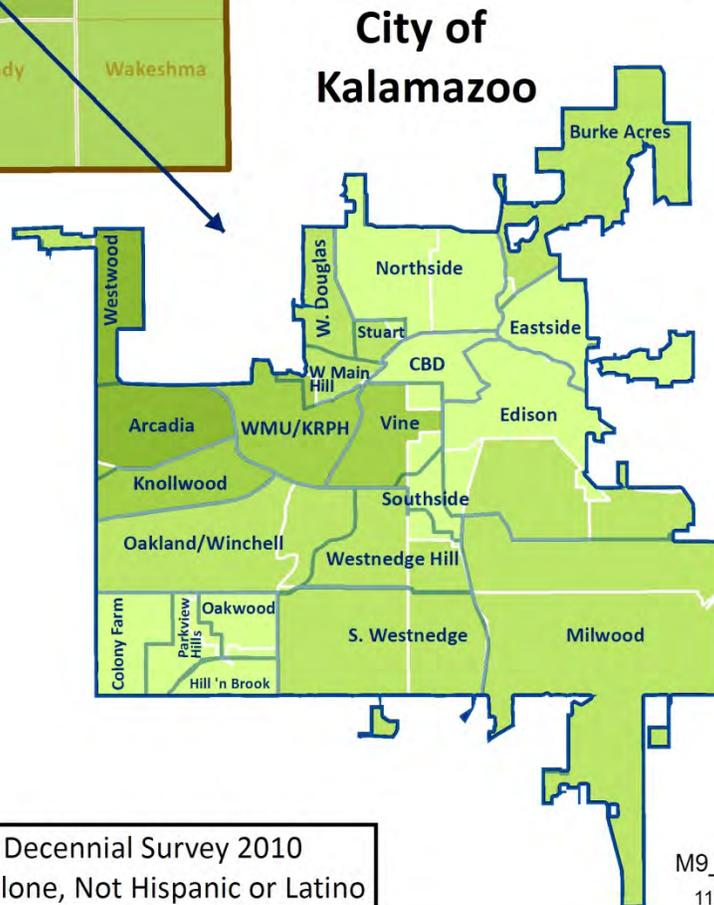
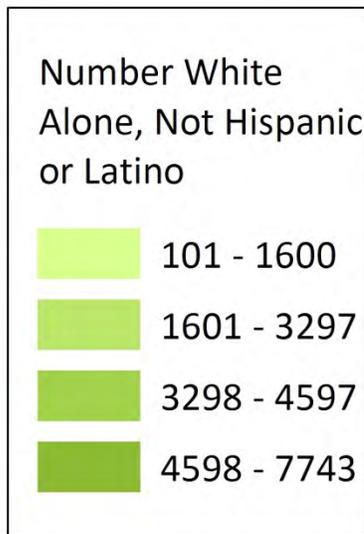
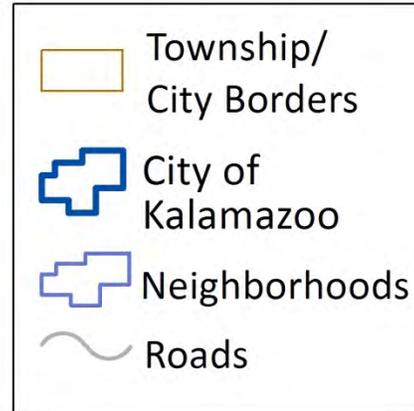


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Survey 2010  
 Variable: HD02\_S114, Percent Hispanic or Latino

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# Distribution of White Population

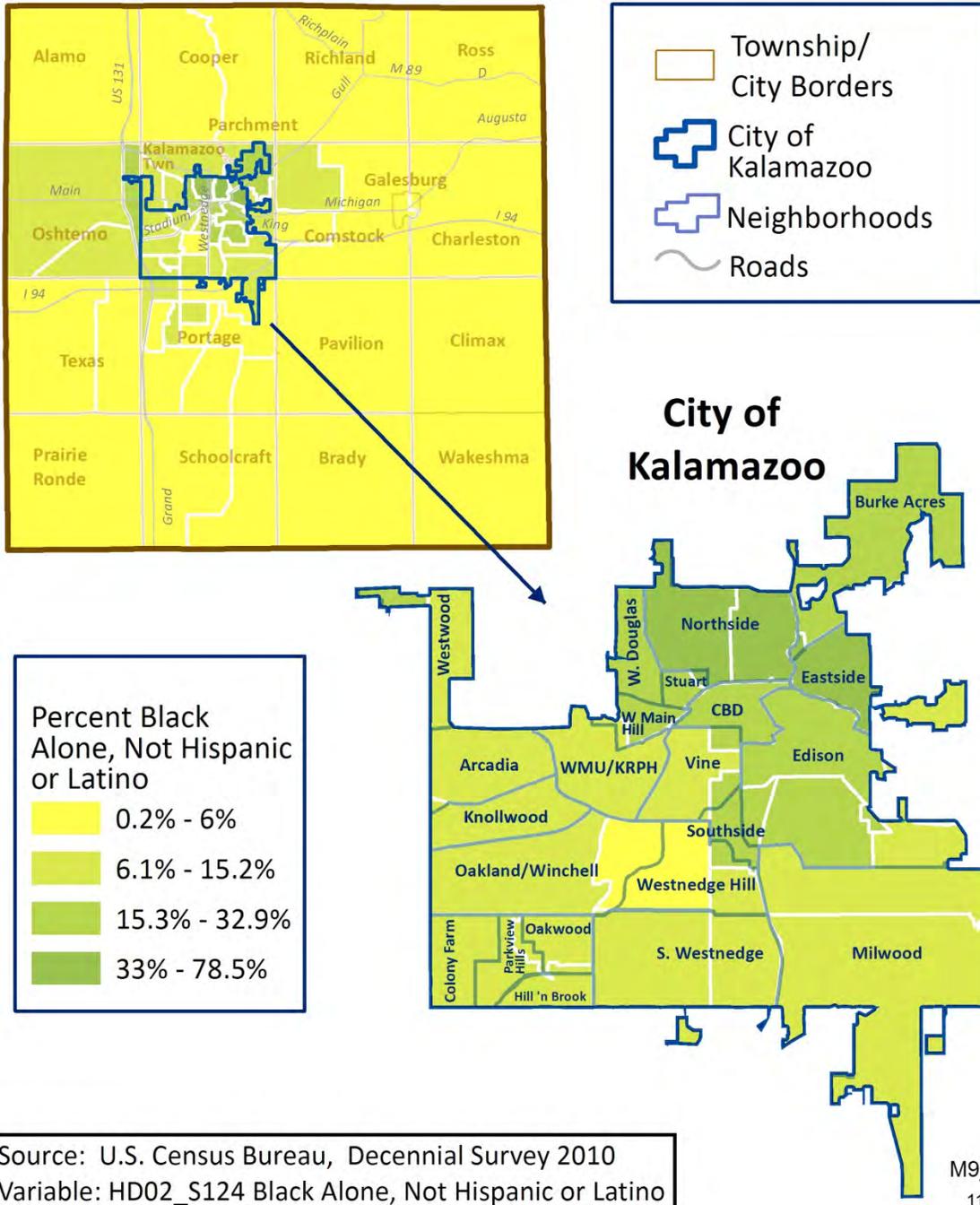
## Kalamazoo County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Survey 2010  
 Variable: HD01\_S123 White alone, Not Hispanic or Latino

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## Distribution of Black Population Kalamazoo County

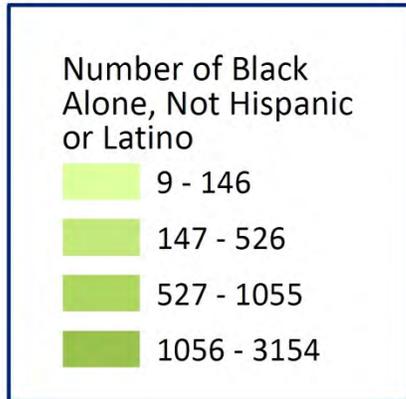
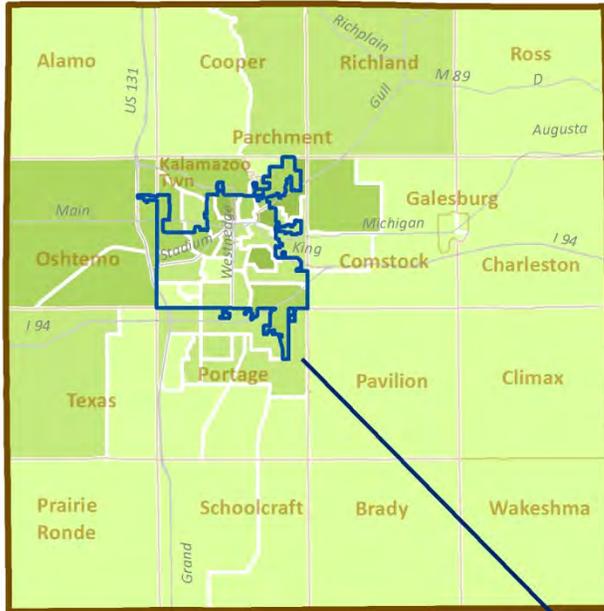


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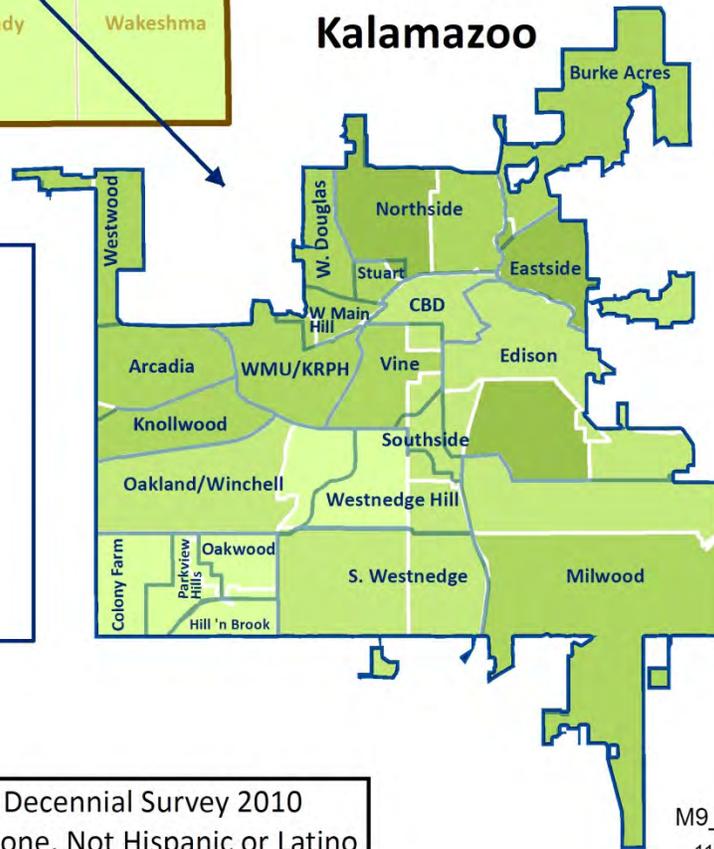
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# Distribution of Black Population

## Kalamazoo County



## City of Kalamazoo

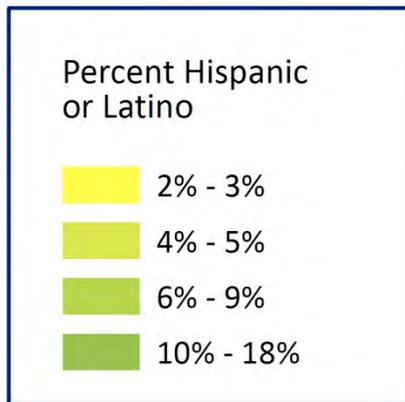
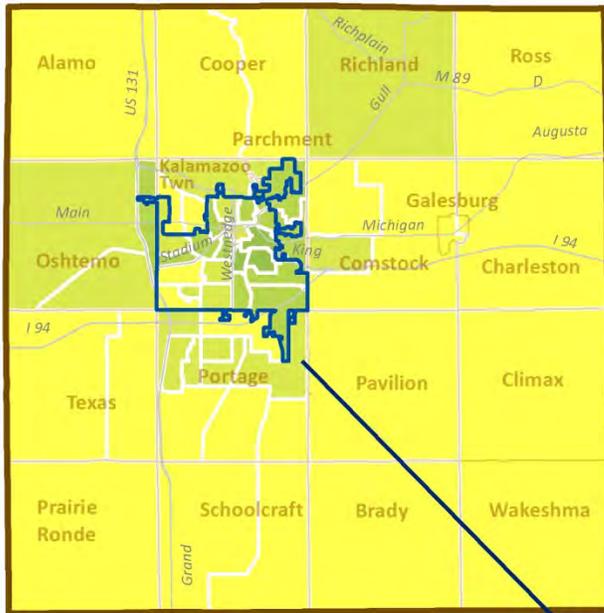


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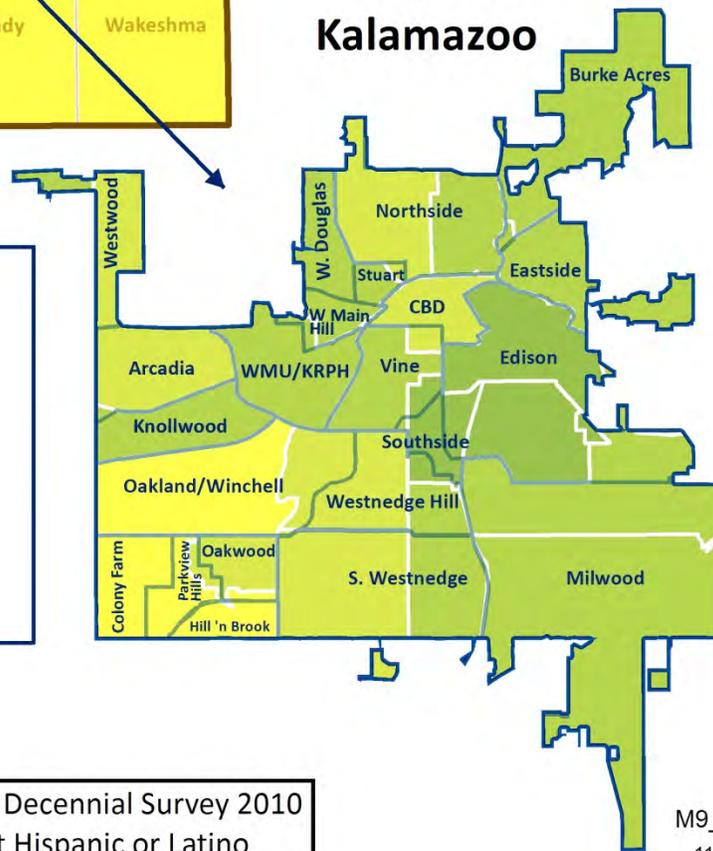
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# Distribution of Hispanic Population

## Kalamazoo County



## City of Kalamazoo

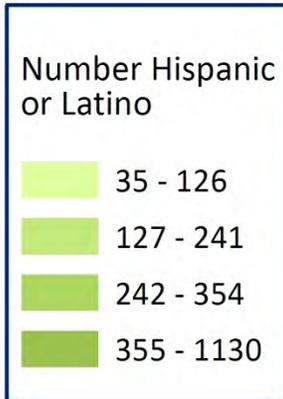


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Survey 2010  
 Variable: HD02\_S114, Percent Hispanic or Latino

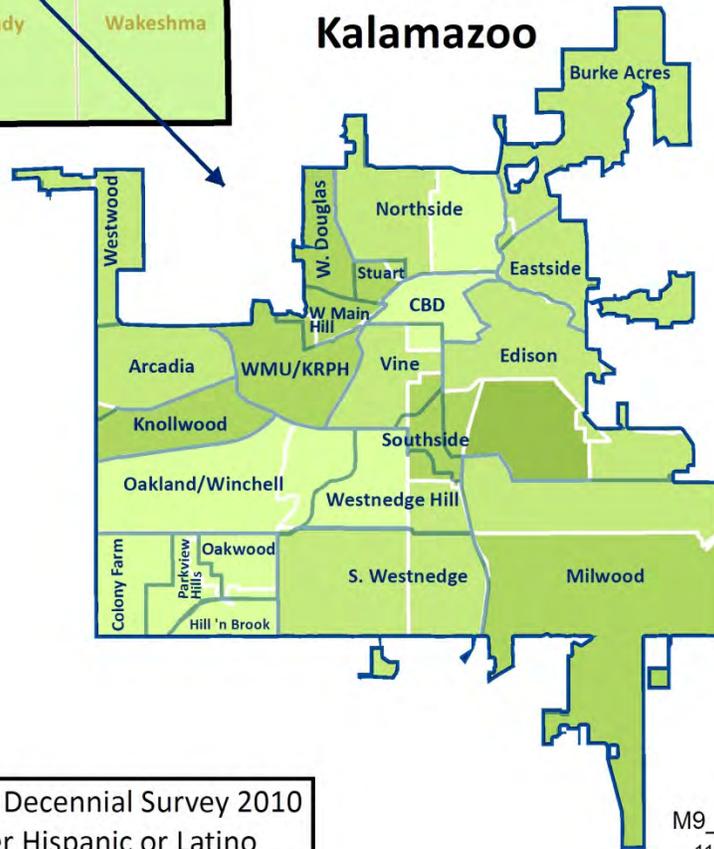
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# Distribution of Hispanic Population

## Kalamazoo County



## City of Kalamazoo

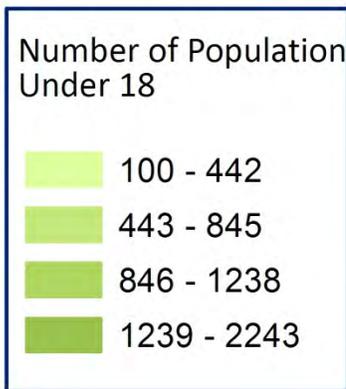


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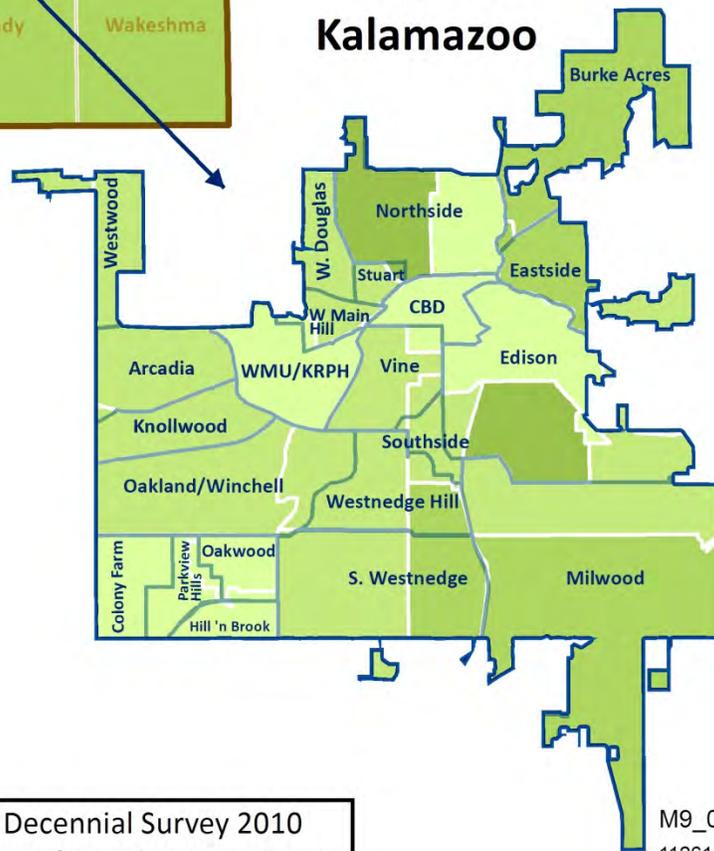
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# Distribution of Population Under 18

## Kalamazoo County



## City of Kalamazoo

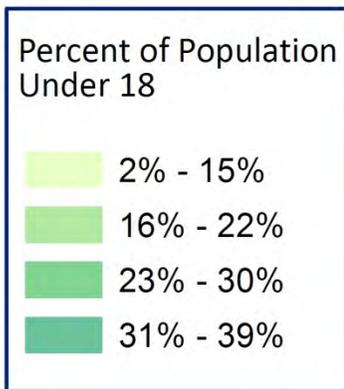
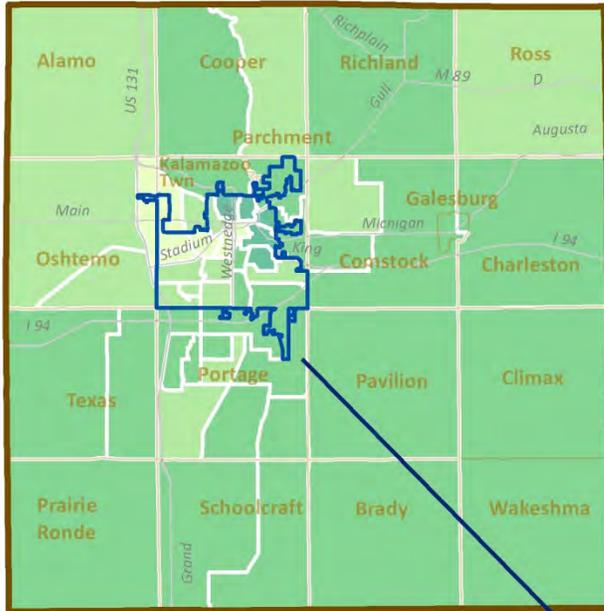


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Survey 2010  
 Variable: HD01\_S022x, Number of Population Under 18

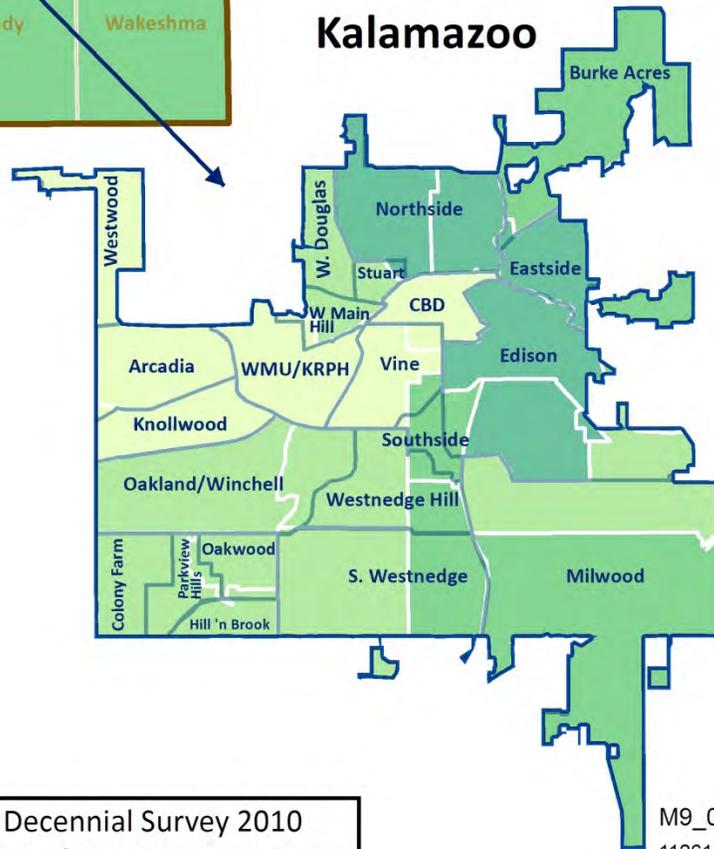
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# Distribution of Population Under 18

## Kalamazoo County



## City of Kalamazoo

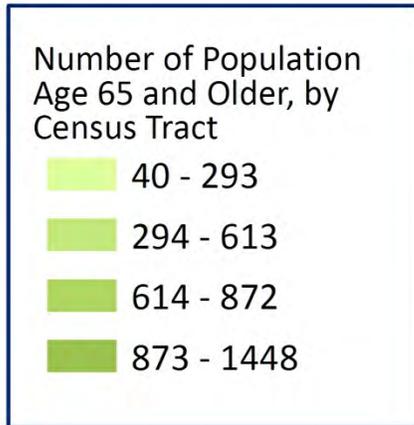


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Survey 2010  
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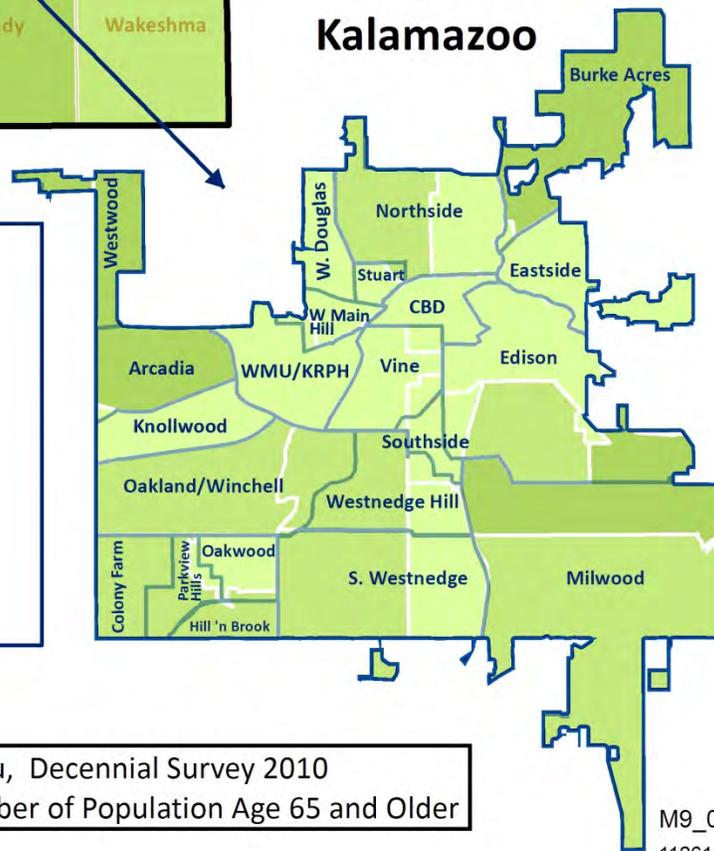
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## Population Age 65 and Older

### Kalamazoo County



### City of Kalamazoo

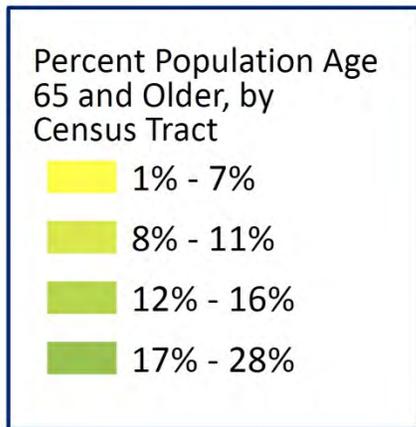


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Survey 2010  
 Variable: HD01\_S025, Number of Population Age 65 and Older

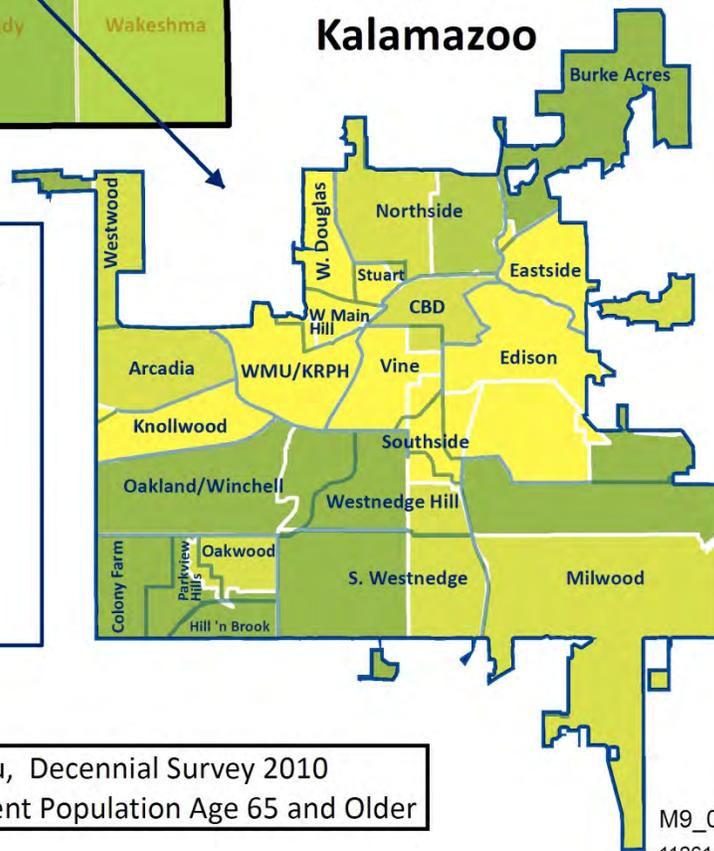
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## Percent Population Age 65 and Older

### Kalamazoo County



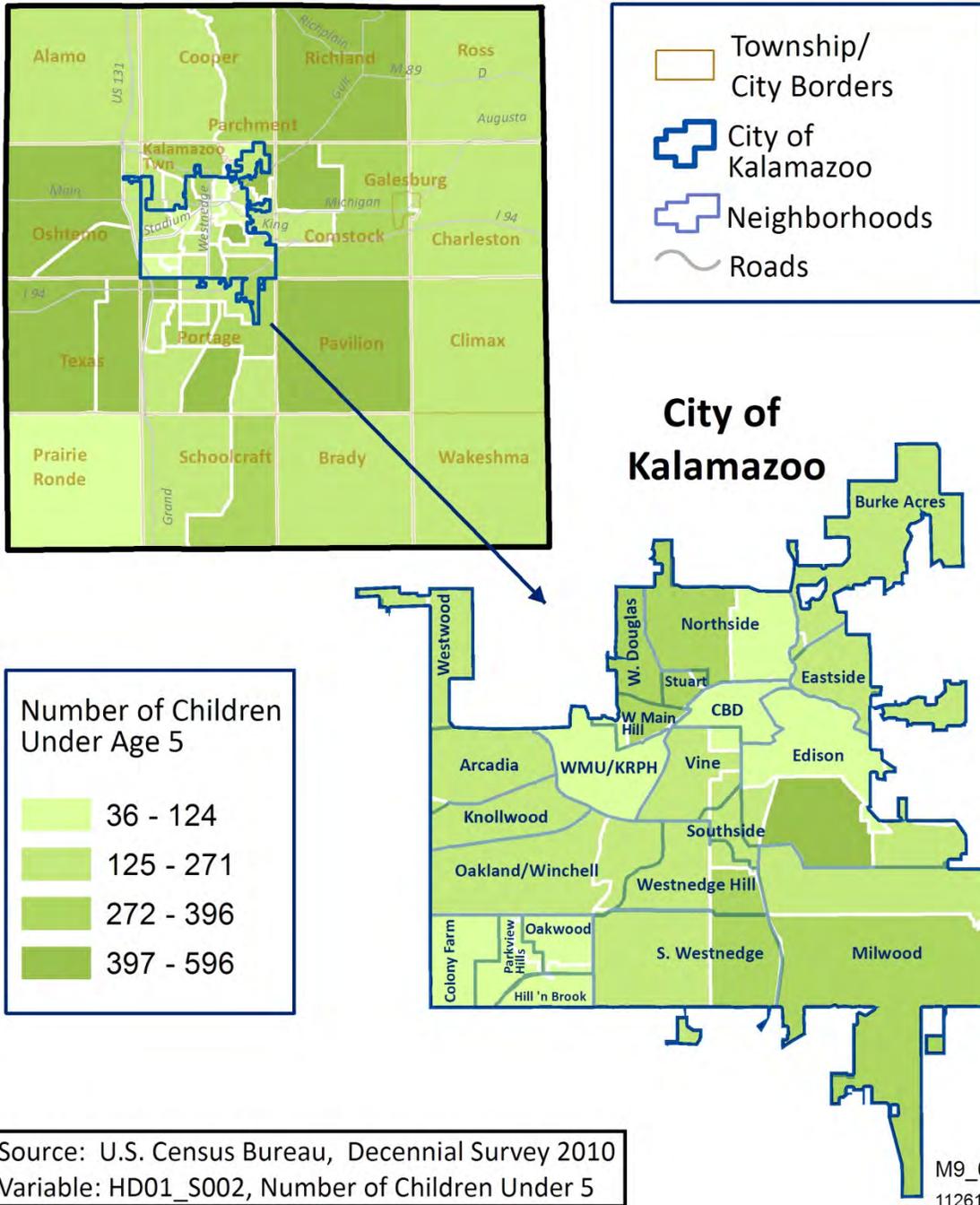
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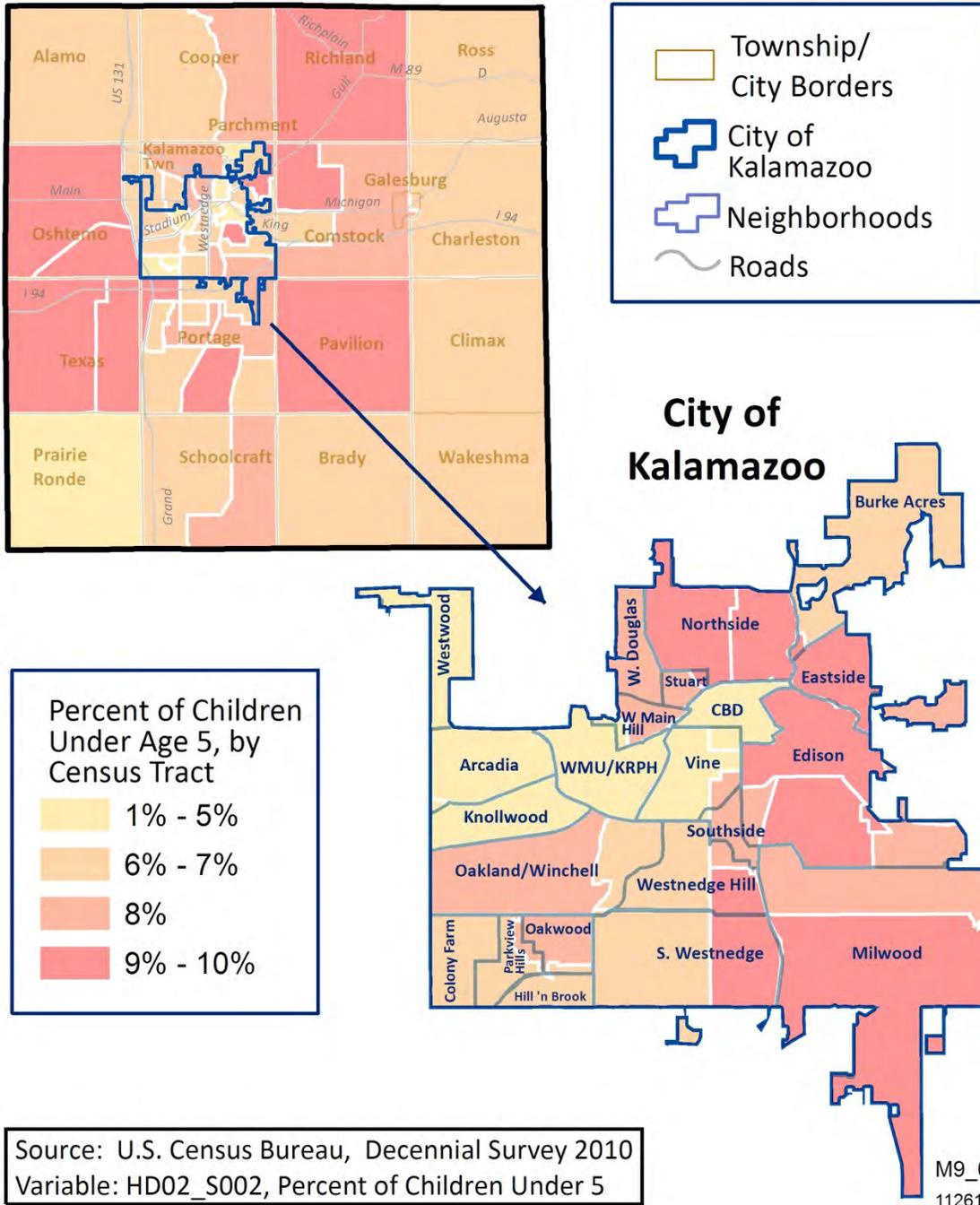
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Survey 2010  
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## Distribution of Children Under Age 5 Kalamazoo County

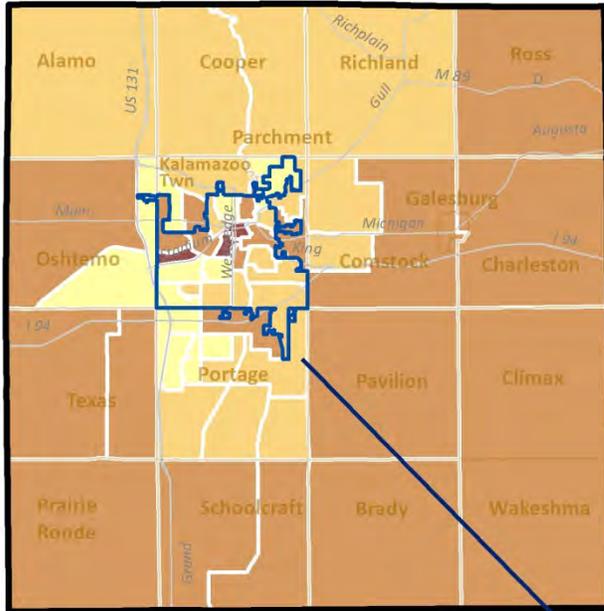


## Distribution of Children Under Age 5 Kalamazoo County

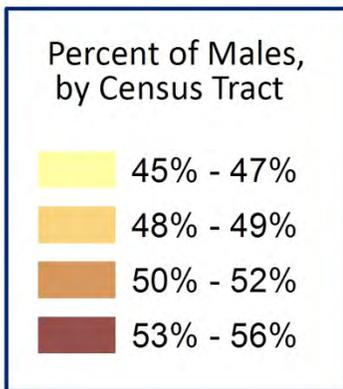
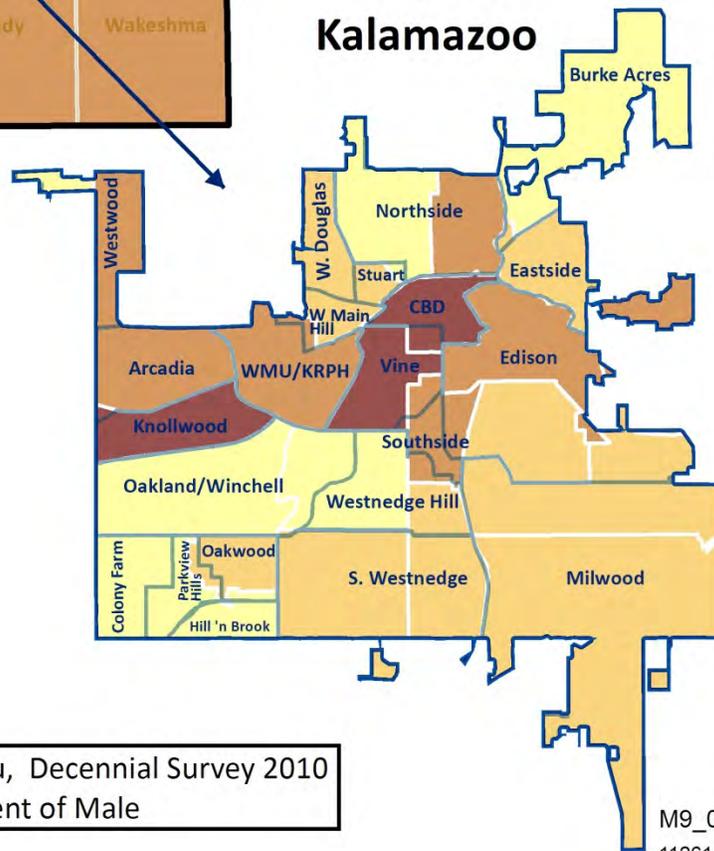


## Distribution of Males

### Kalamazoo County



### City of Kalamazoo

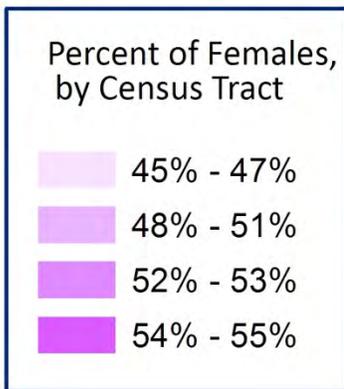
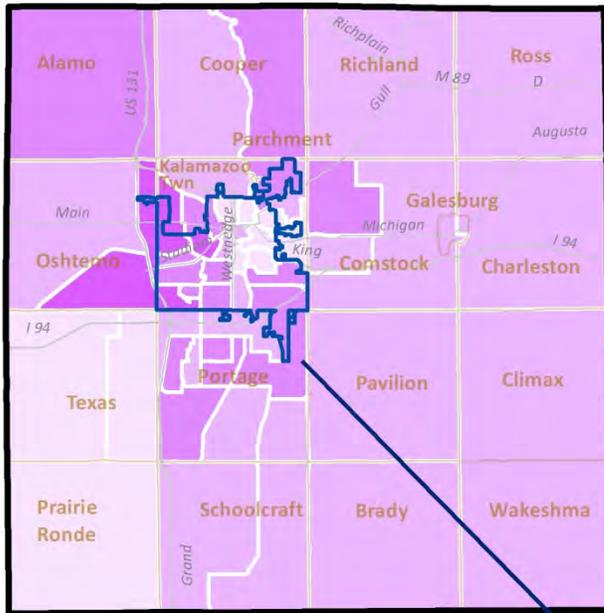


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Survey 2010  
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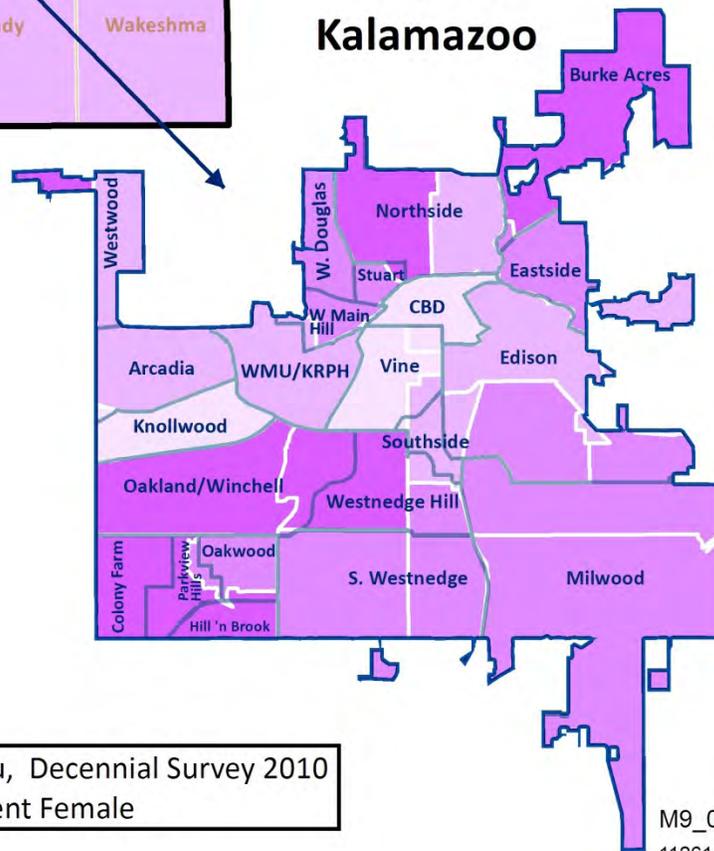
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## Distribution of Females

### Kalamazoo County



### City of Kalamazoo

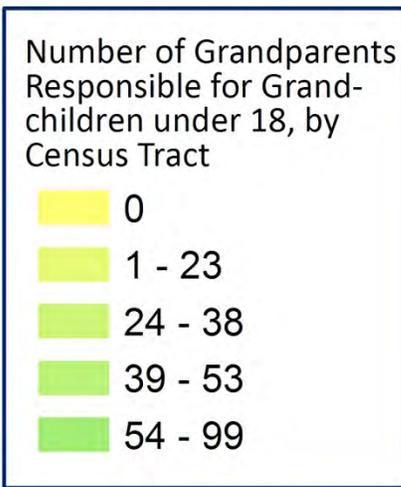
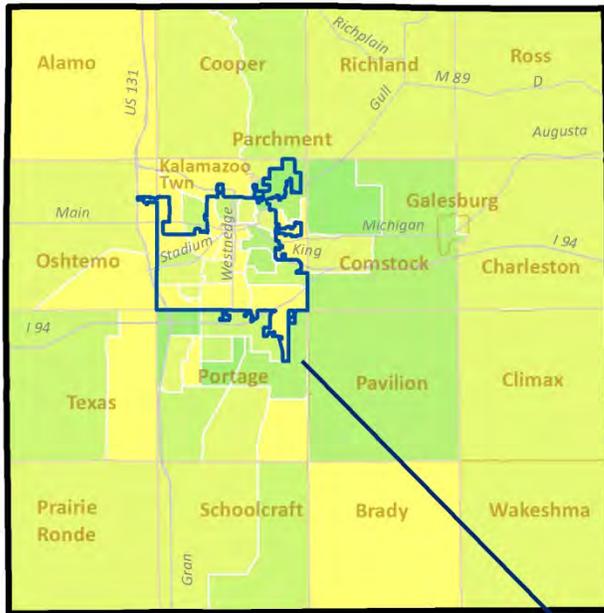


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Survey 2010  
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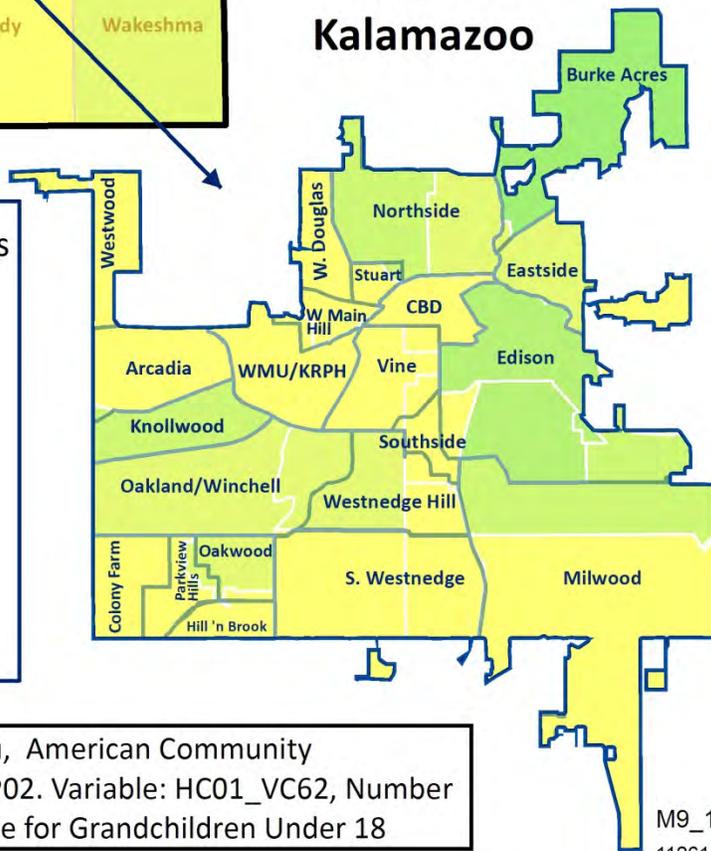
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# Grandparents Responsible for Grandchildren Under 18

## Kalamazoo County



## City of Kalamazoo

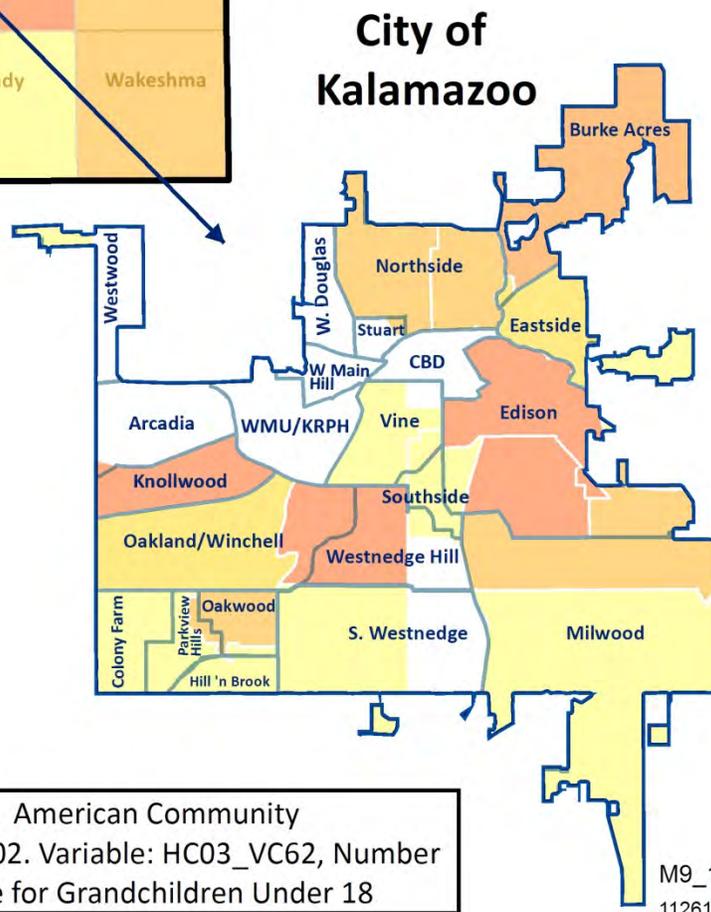
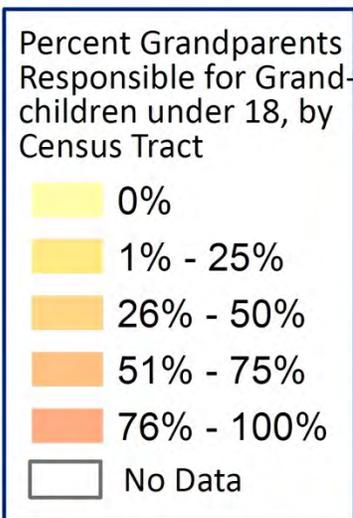
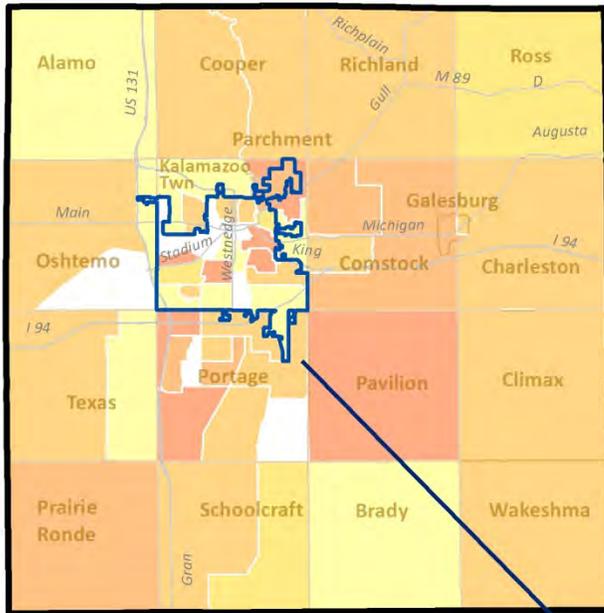


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007-2011. Table DP02. Variable: HC01\_VC62, Number of Grandparents Responsible for Grandchildren Under 18

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112613

# Grandparents Responsible for Grandchildren Under 18

## Kalamazoo County

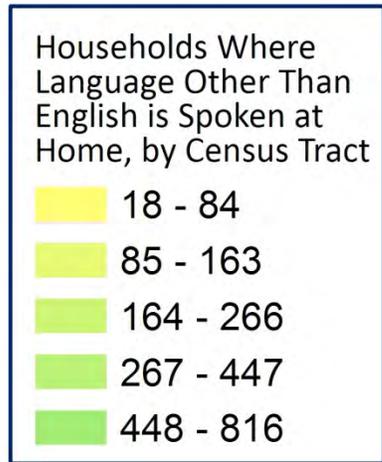
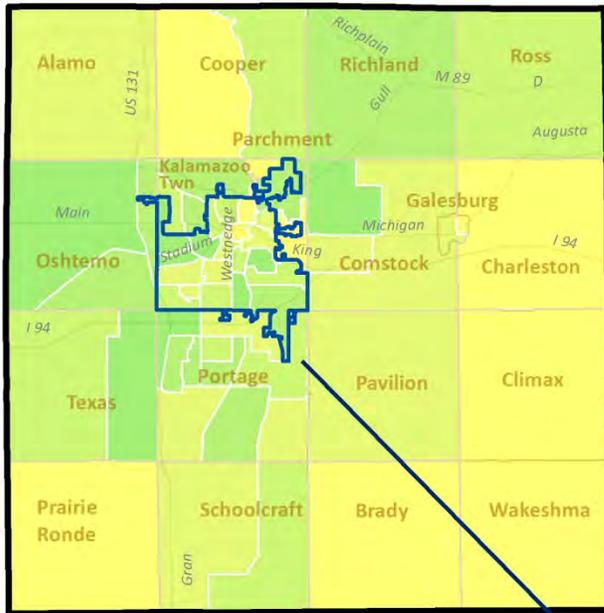


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007-2011. Table DP02. Variable: HC03\_VC62, Number of Grandparents Responsible for Grandchildren Under 18

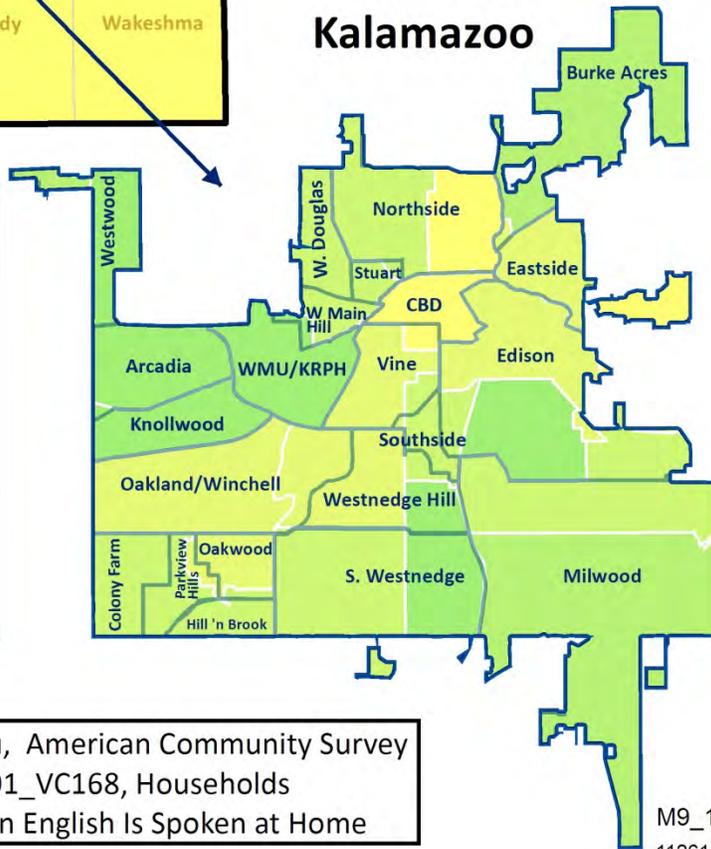
M9\_10b  
112613

## Language Other than English Spoken at Home

### Kalamazoo County



### City of Kalamazoo

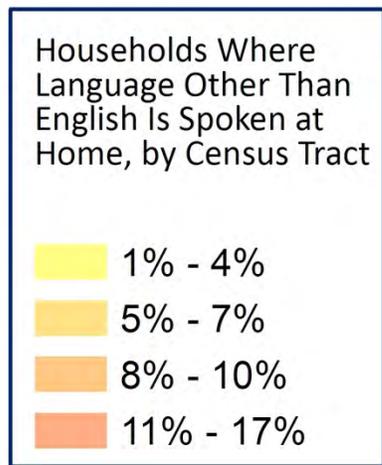
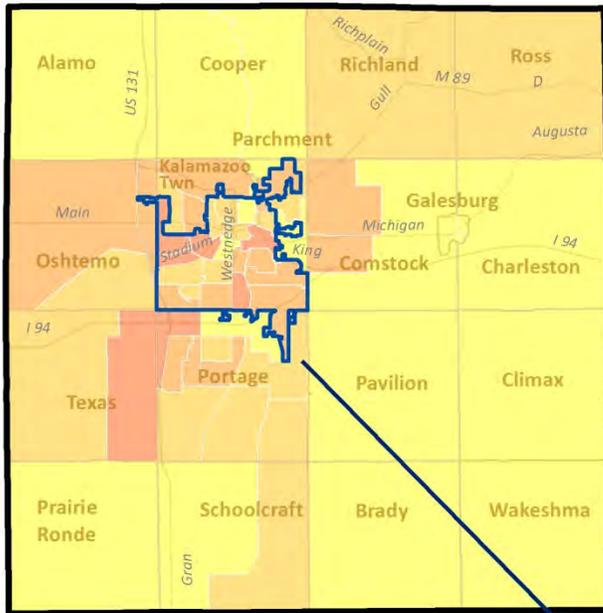


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007 to 2011. Variable: HC01\_VC168, Households Where Language Other Than English Is Spoken at Home

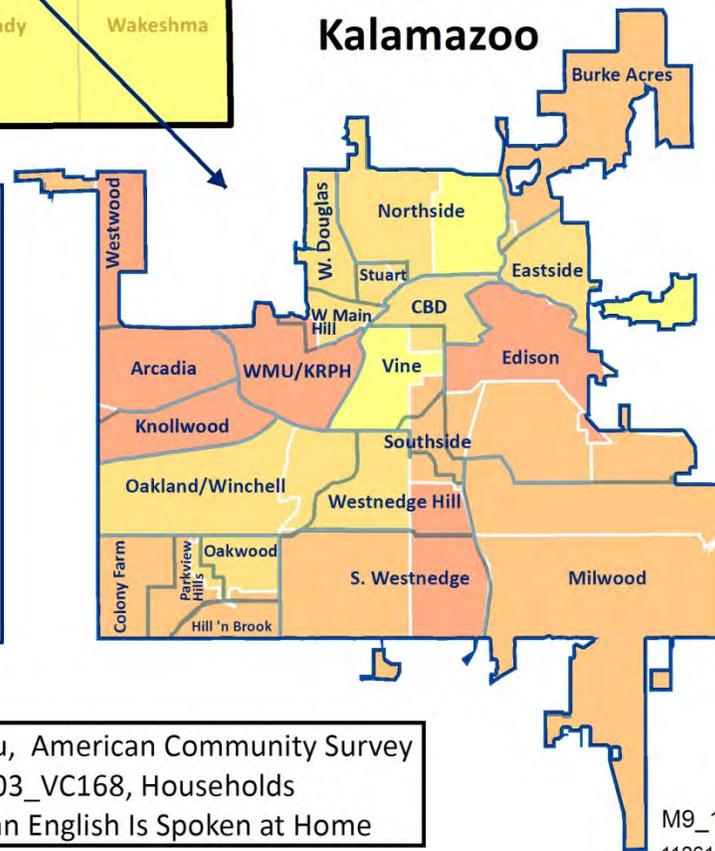
M9\_11a  
112613

## Language Other than English Spoken at Home

### Kalamazoo County



### City of Kalamazoo

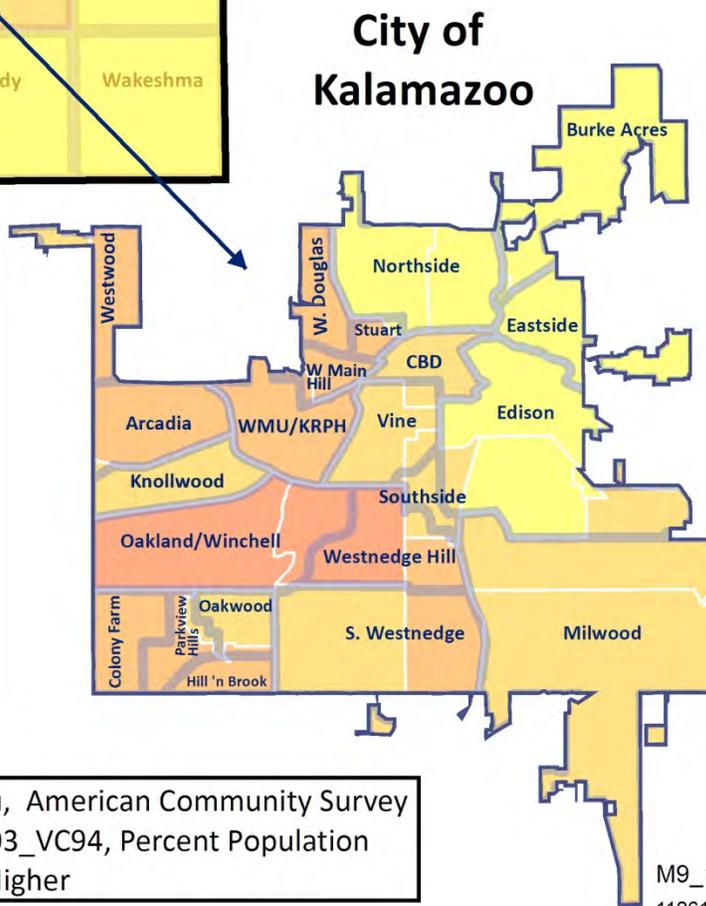
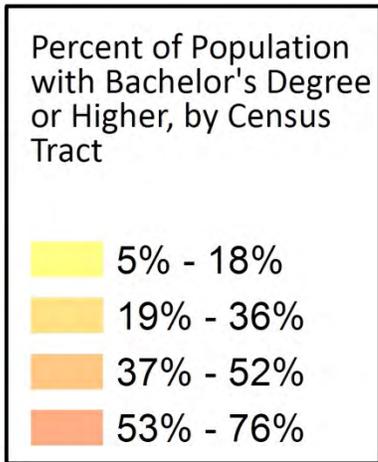
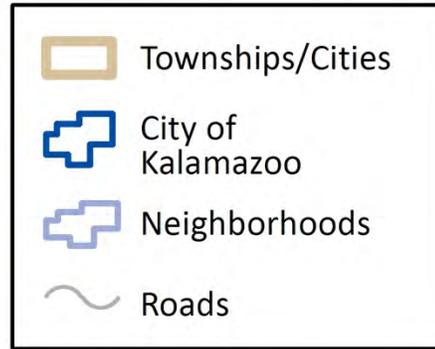
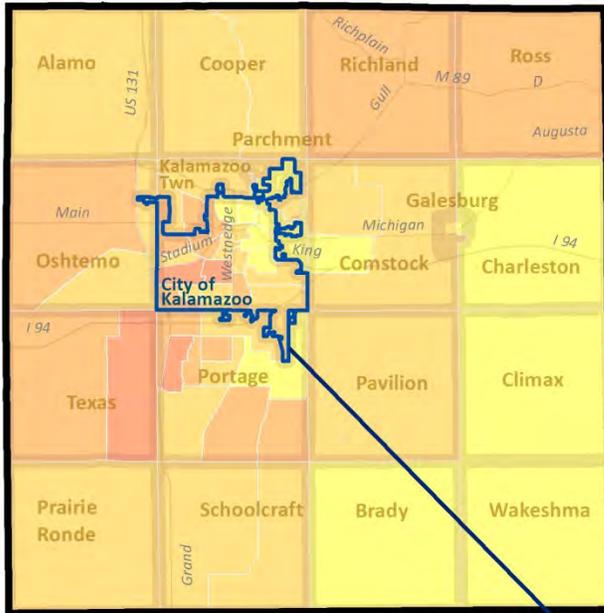


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007 to 2011. Variable: HC03\_VC168, Households Where Language Other Than English Is Spoken at Home

M9\_11b  
112613

## Population with Bachelor's Degree or Higher

### Kalamazoo County

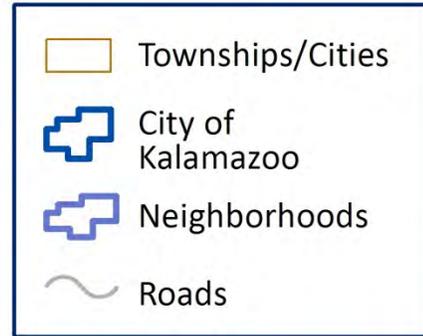
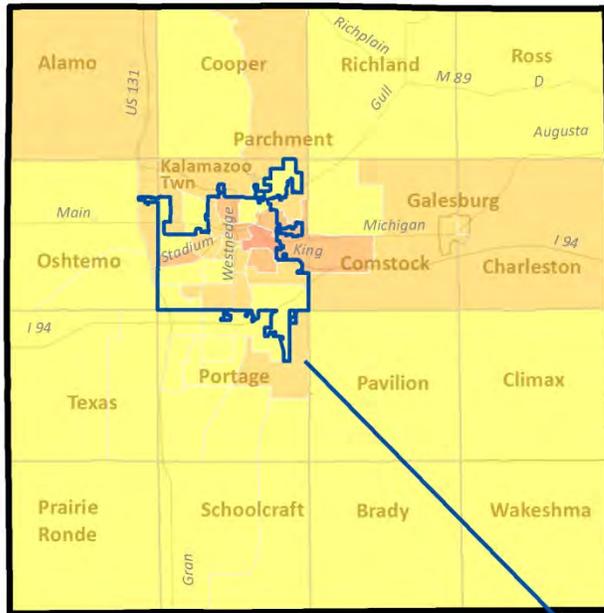


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007 to 2011. Variable: HC03\_VC94, Percent Population with Bachelor's Degree or Higher

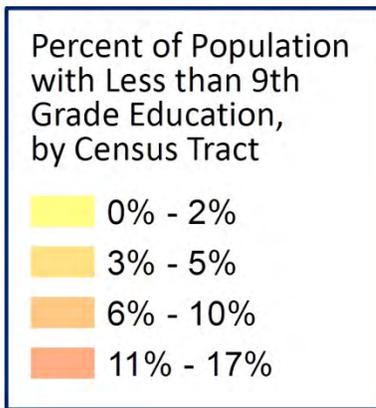
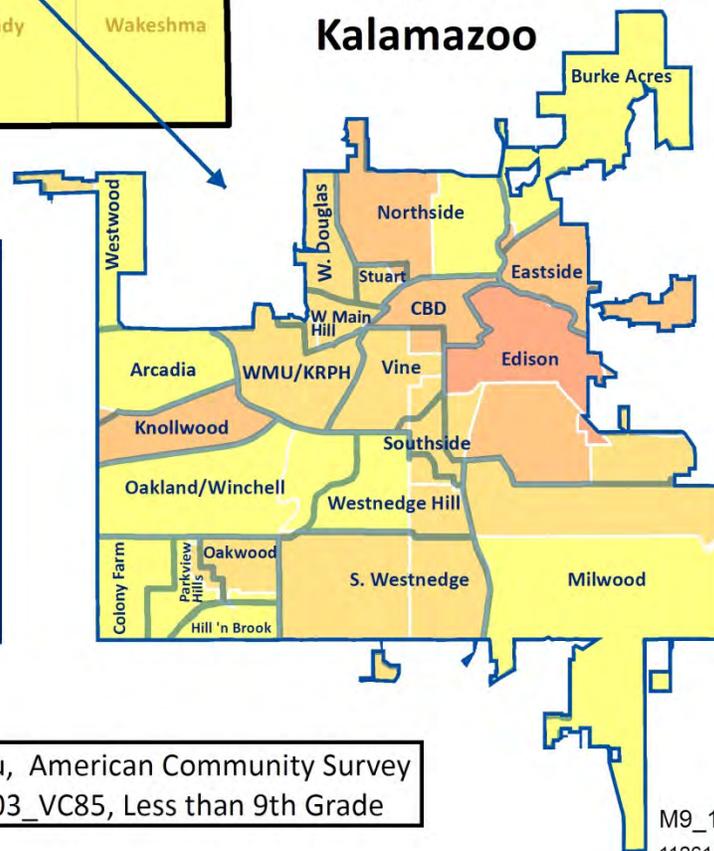
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## Population with Less than 9th Grade Education

### Kalamazoo County



### City of Kalamazoo

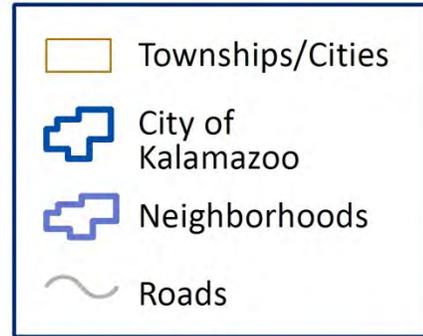
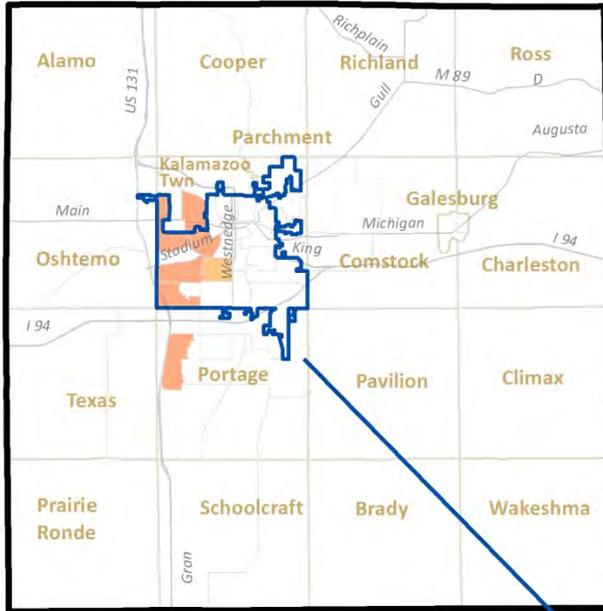


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007 to 2011. Variable: HC03\_VC85, Less than 9th Grade

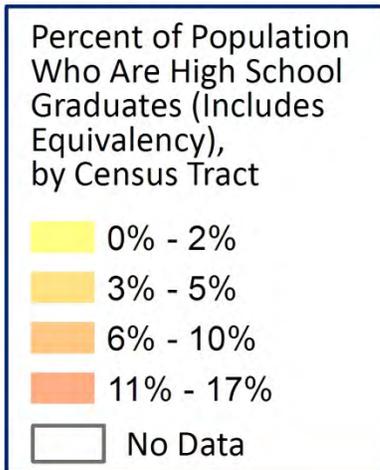
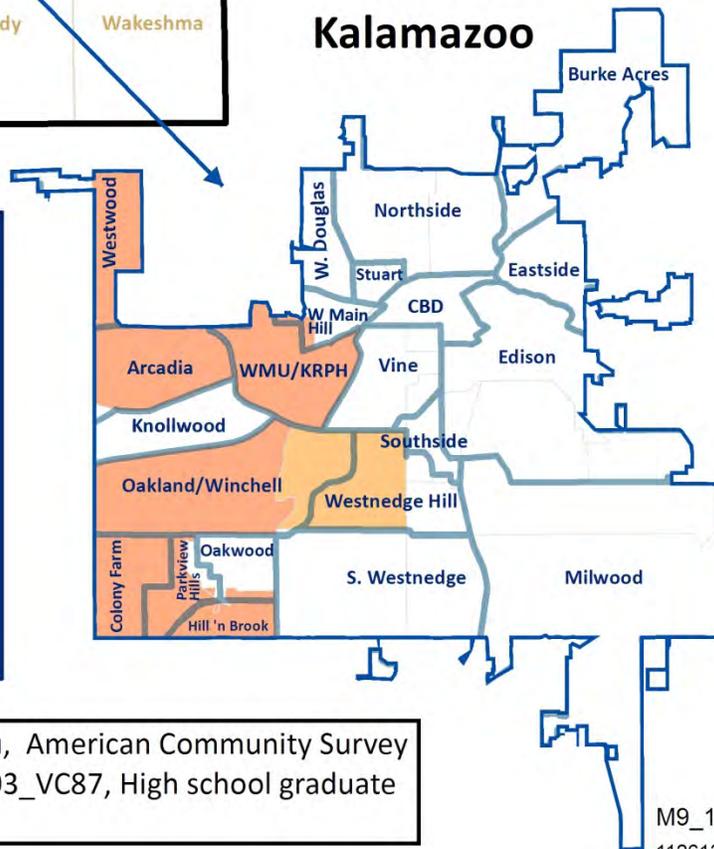
M9\_14b  
112613

## Percent of High School Graduates

### Kalamazoo County



### City of Kalamazoo

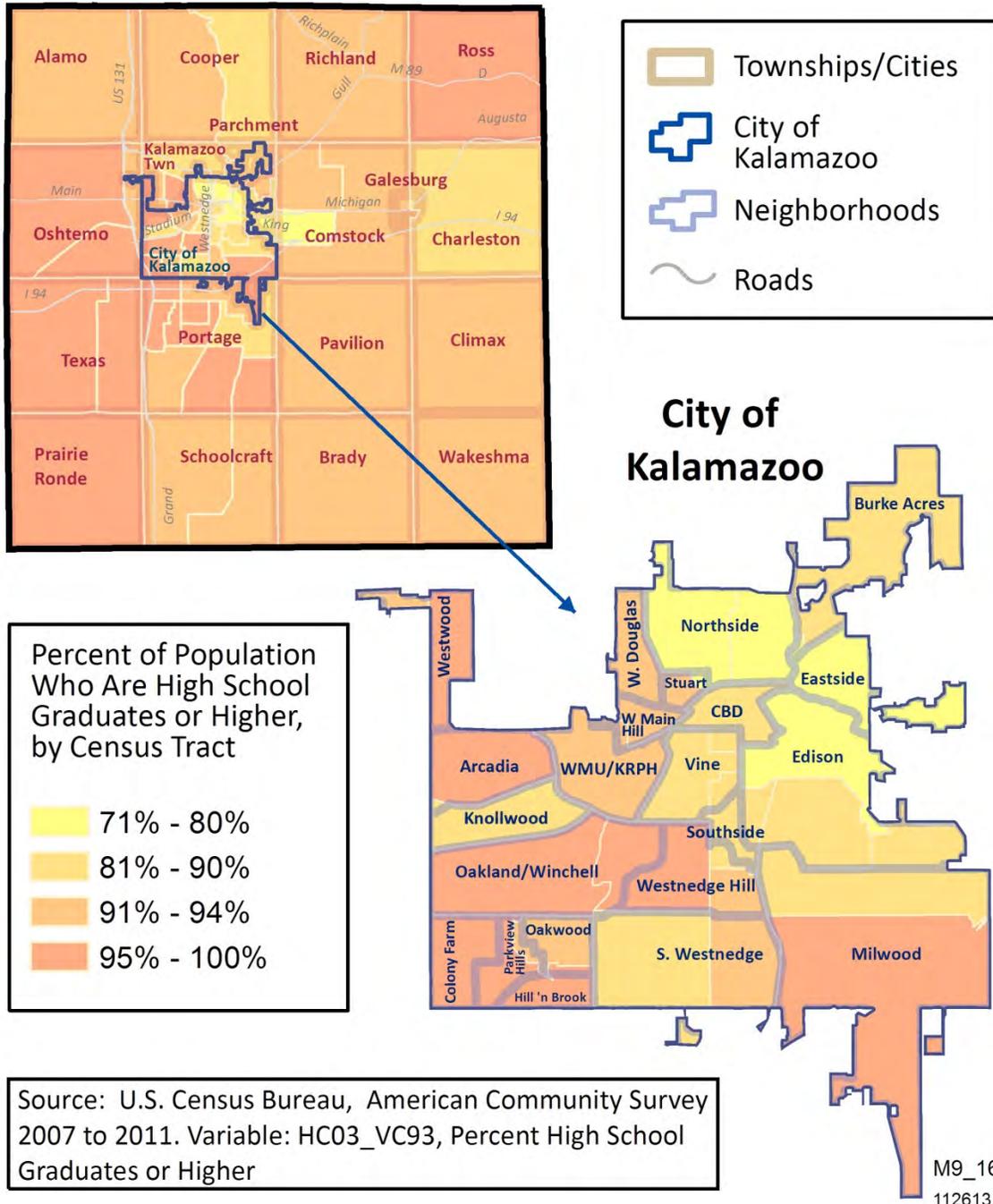


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007 to 2011. Variable: HC03\_VC87, High school graduate (includes equivalency)

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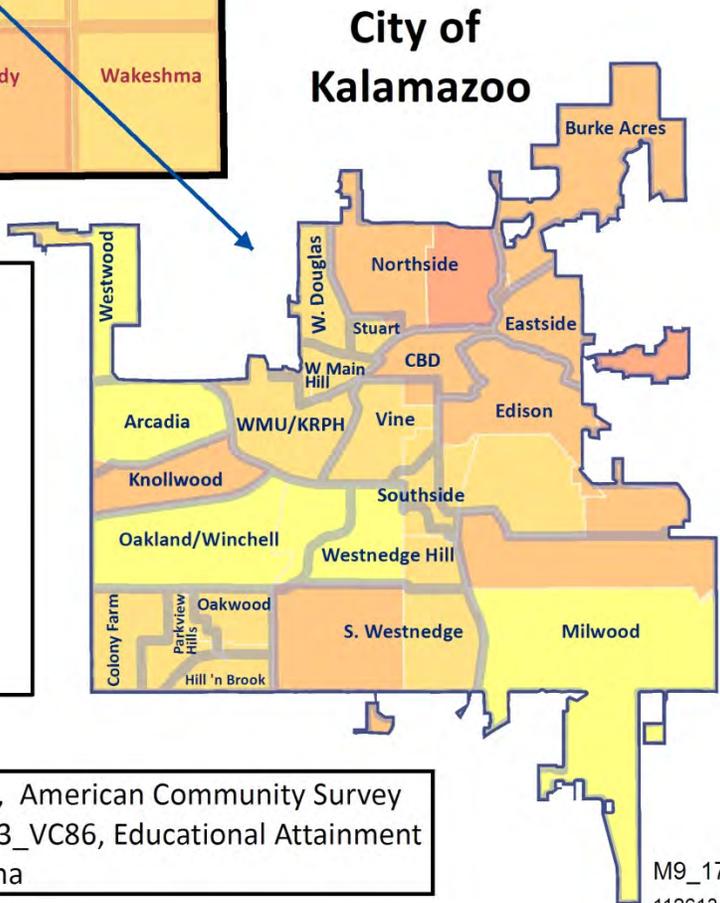
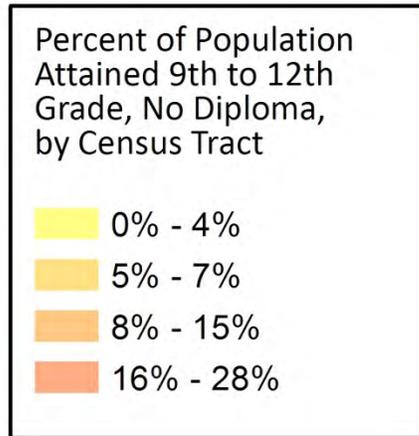
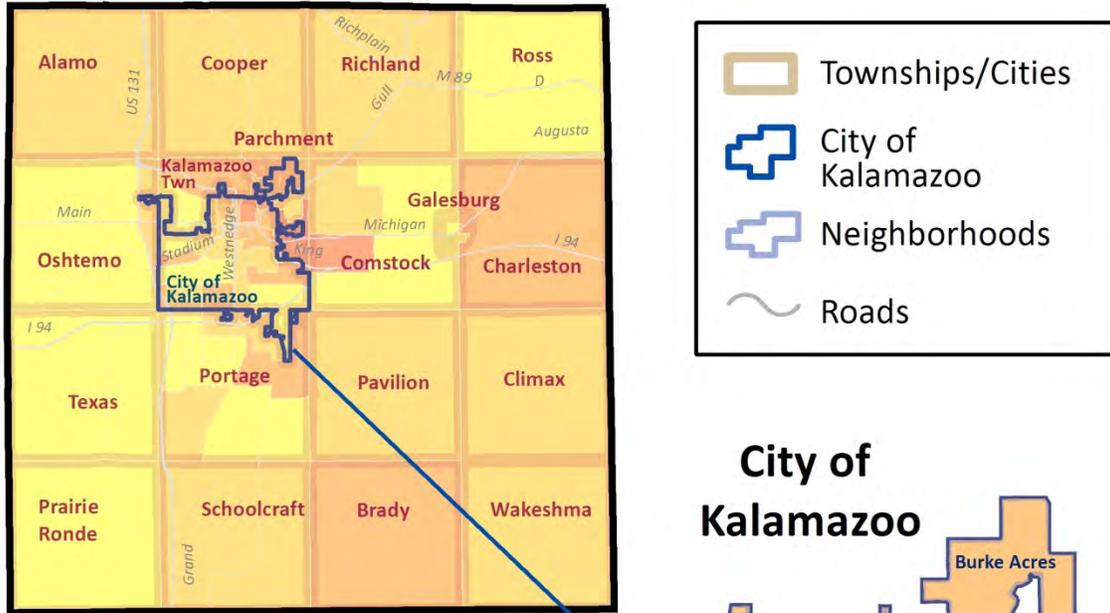
## Percent High School Graduates or Higher

### Kalamazoo County



## Educational Attainment: 9th to 12th Grade, No Diploma

### Kalamazoo County

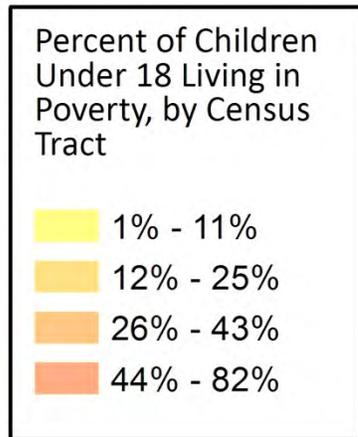
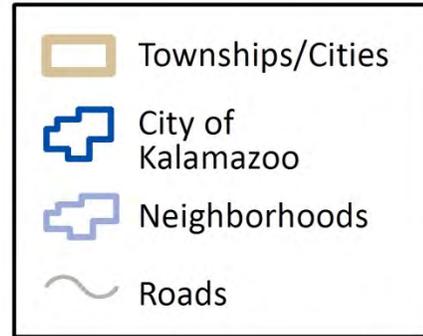


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007 to 2011. Variable: HC03\_VC86, Educational Attainment 9th to 12th grade, no diploma

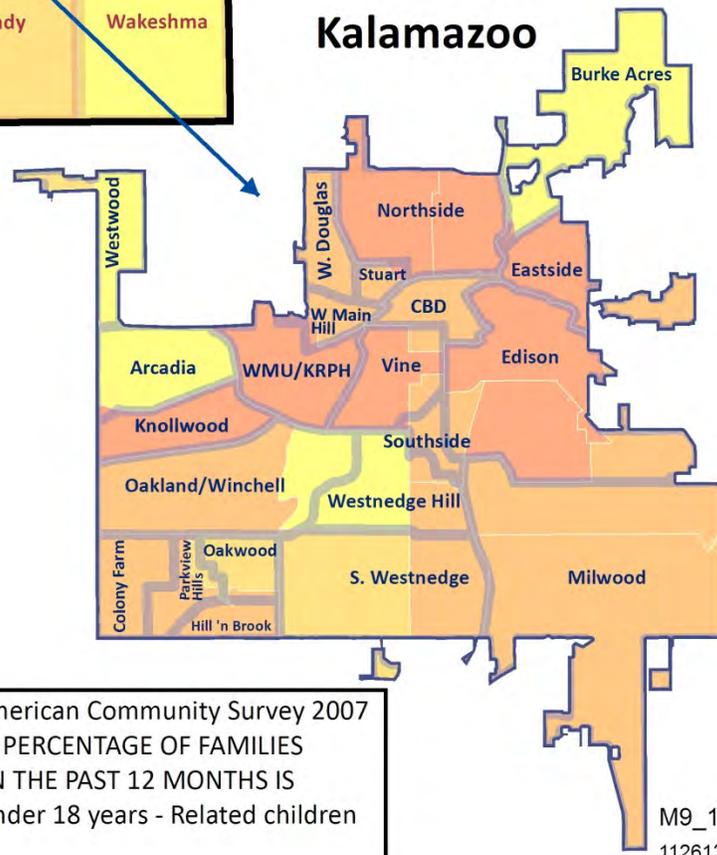
M9\_17b  
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## Percent of Children Living in Poverty

### Kalamazoo County



### City of Kalamazoo

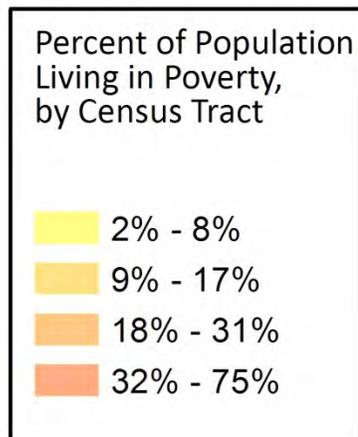
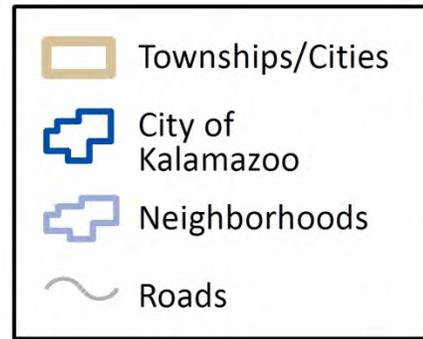


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007 to 2011. Variable: HC03\_VC167. PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES AND PEOPLE WHOSE INCOME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS IS BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL - Under 18 years - Related children under 18 years.

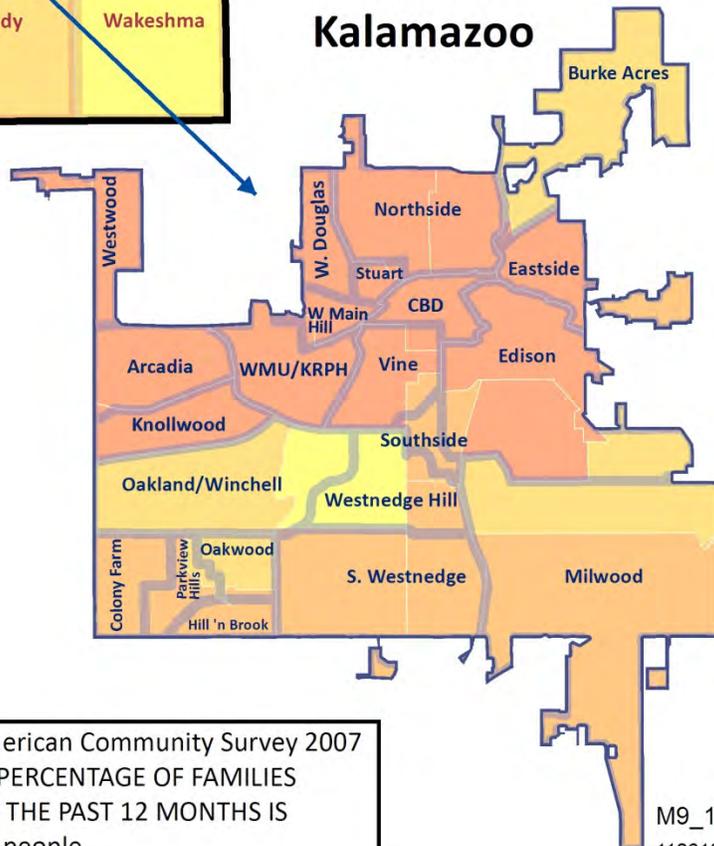
M9\_18b  
112613

## Percent of Population Living in Poverty

### Kalamazoo County



### City of Kalamazoo



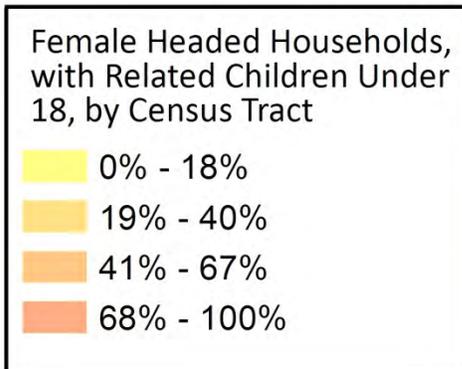
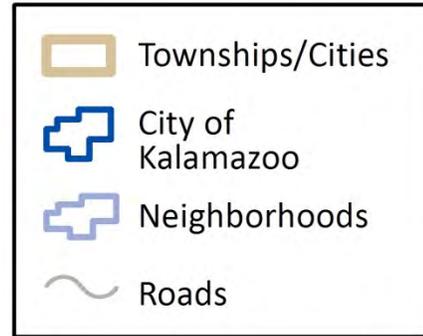
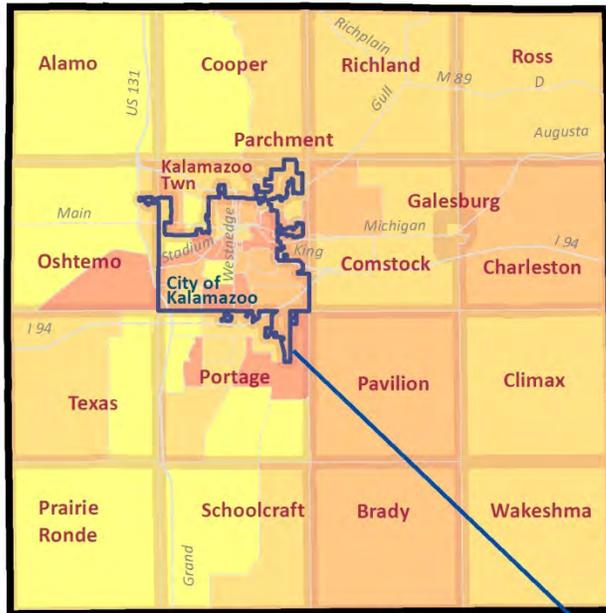
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007 to 2011. Variable: HC03\_VC166. PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES AND PEOPLE WHOSE INCOME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS IS BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL - All people

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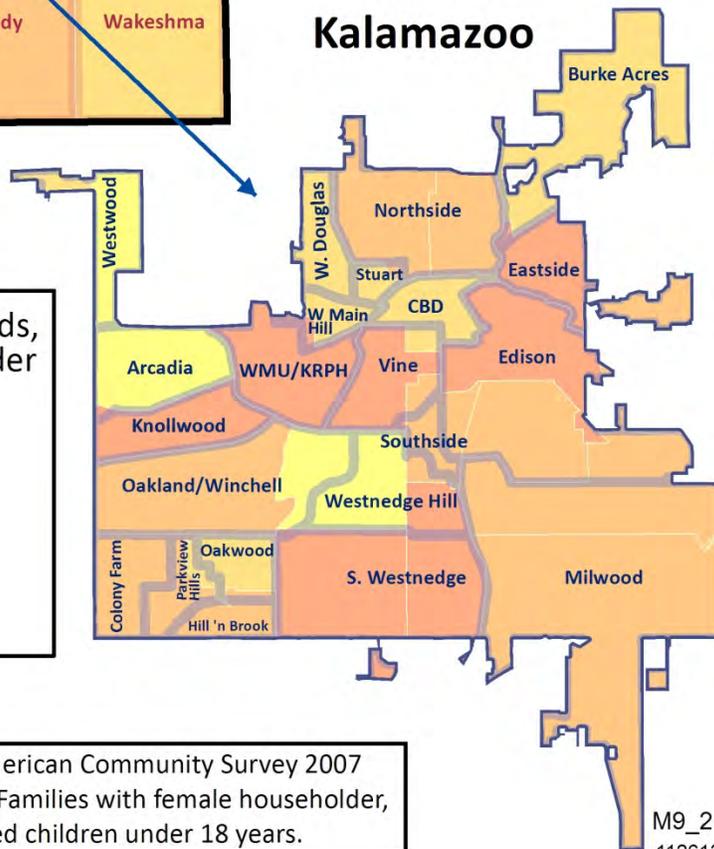


## Female Headed Households with Children Living in Poverty

### Kalamazoo County



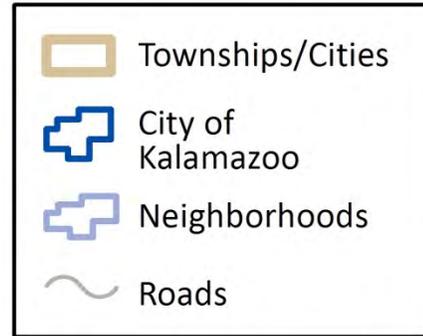
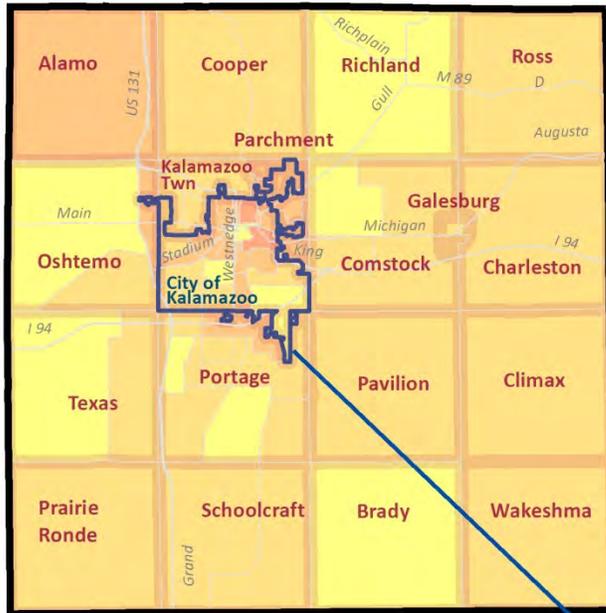
### City of Kalamazoo



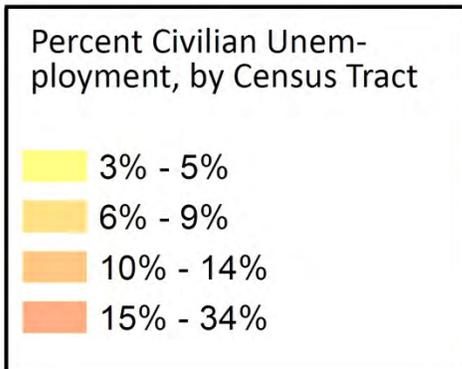
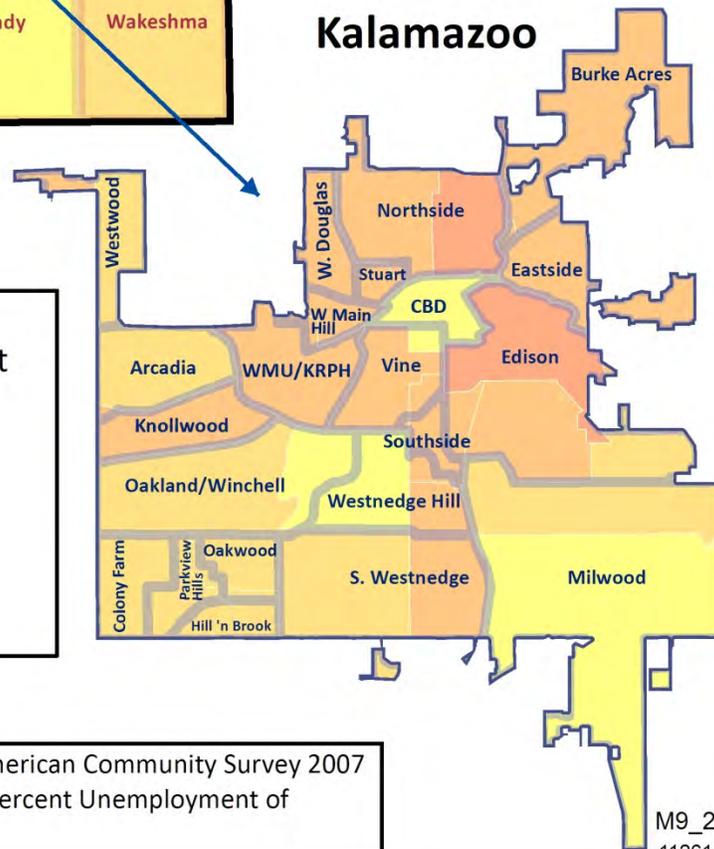
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007 to 2011. Variable: HC03\_VC163. Families with female householder, no husband present - With related children under 18 years.

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## Percent Civilian Unemployment Kalamazoo County



### City of Kalamazoo

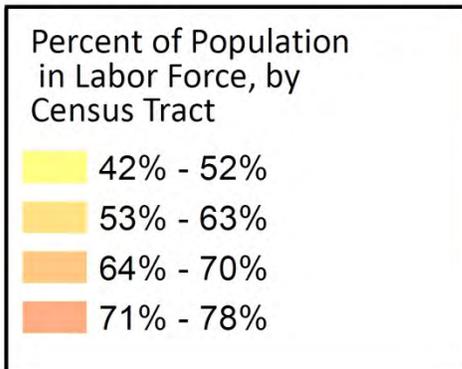
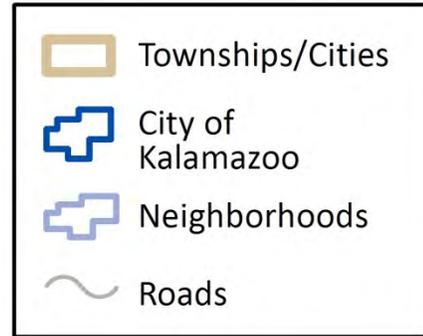


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007 to 2011. Variable: HC03\_VC08. Percent Unemployment of Civilians Age 16 Plus.

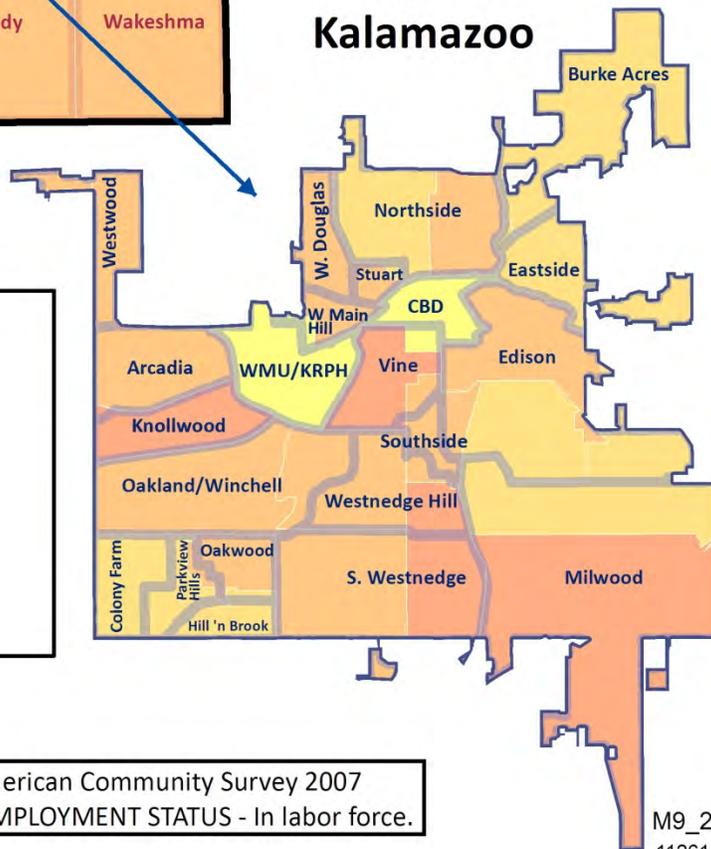
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## Percent of Population in Labor Force

### Kalamazoo County



### City of Kalamazoo

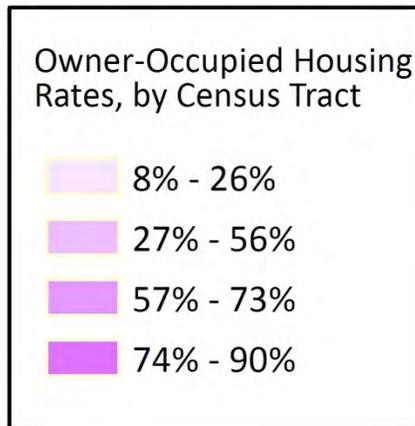
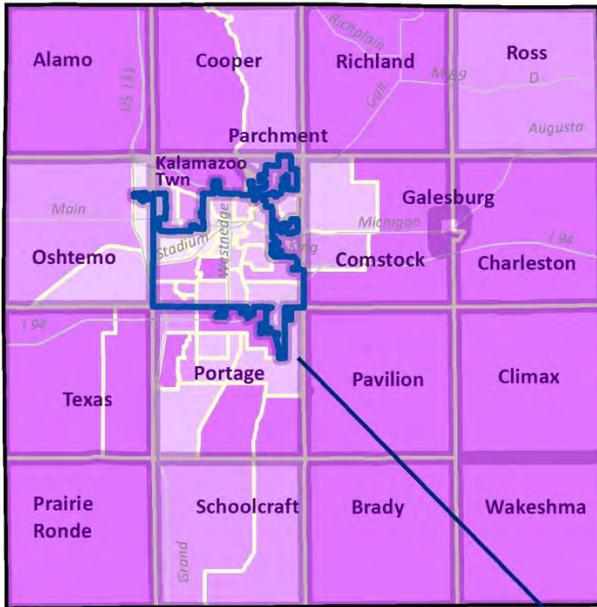


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007 to 2011. Variable: HC03\_VC05.EMPLOYMENT STATUS - In labor force.

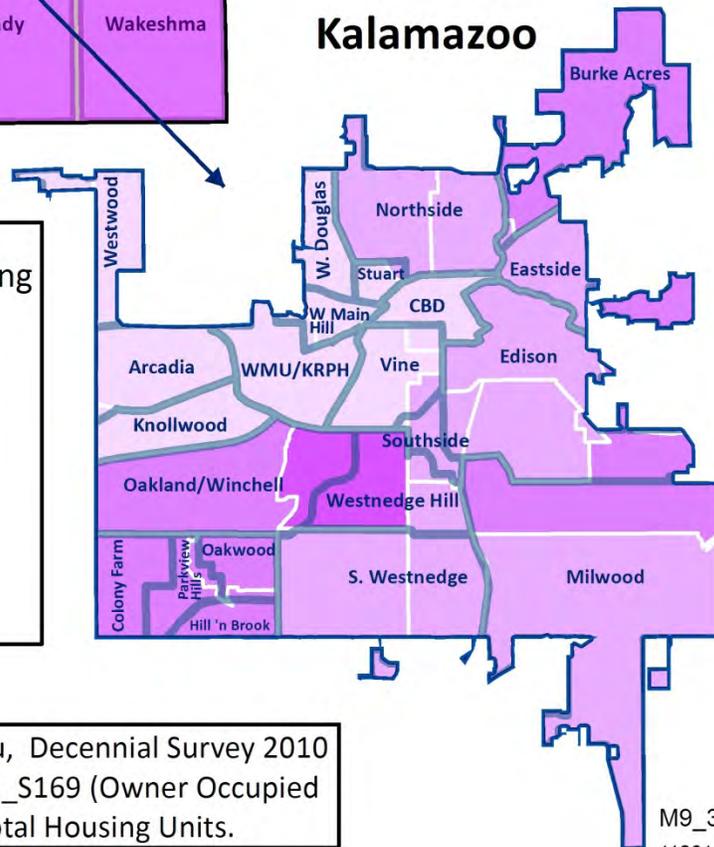
M9\_24b  
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# Owner-Occupied Housing Rates

## Kalamazoo County



## City of Kalamazoo

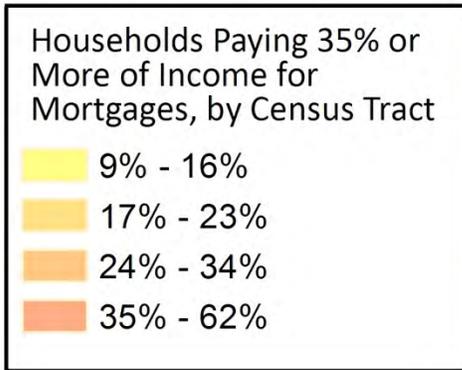
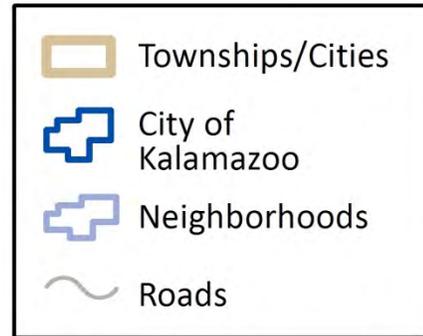


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Survey 2010  
 Variable: HD01\_S181/HD01\_S169 (Owner Occupied Housing Units divided by Total Housing Units.)

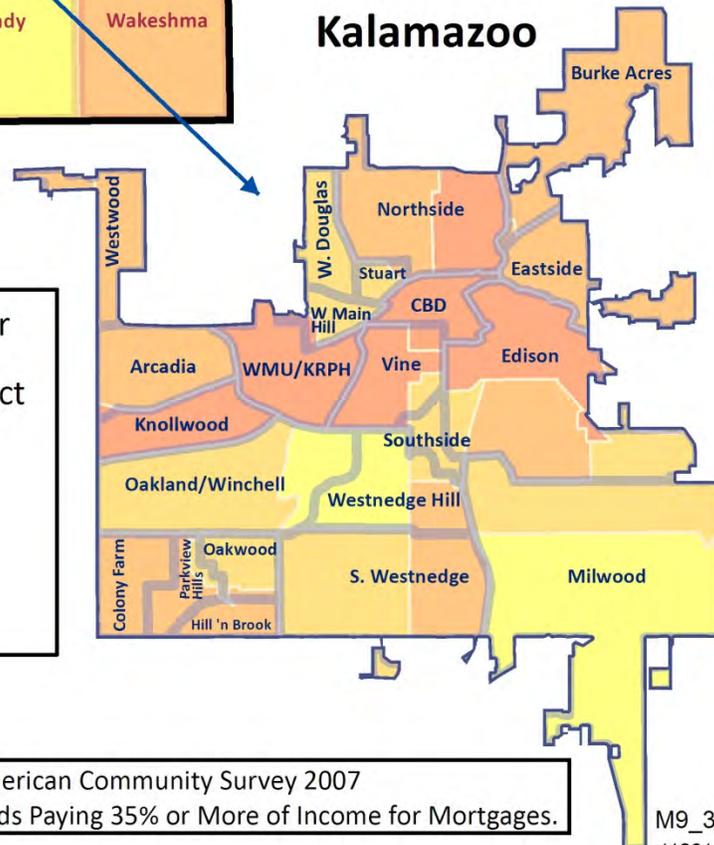
M9\_30b  
 112613

# Households Paying 35% or More of Income for Mortgages

## Kalamazoo County



## City of Kalamazoo

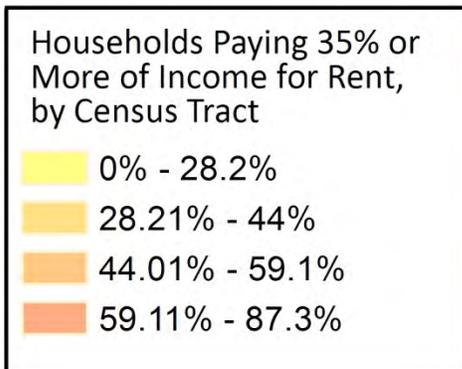
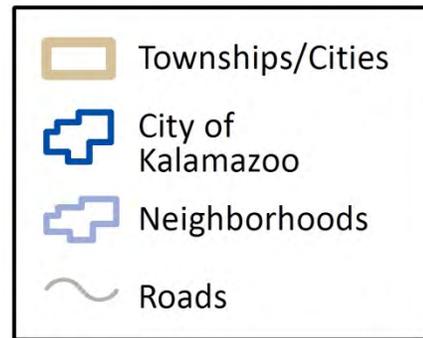


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007 to 2011. HC03\_VC160. Households Paying 35% or More of Income for Mortgages.

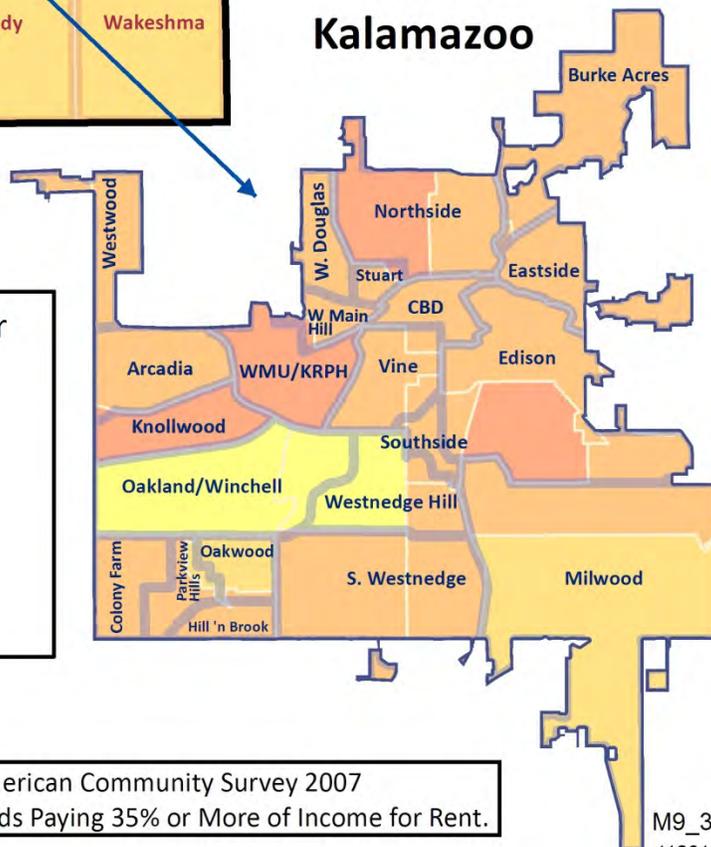
M9\_37b  
112613

# Households Paying 35% or More of Income for Rent

## Kalamazoo County



## City of Kalamazoo

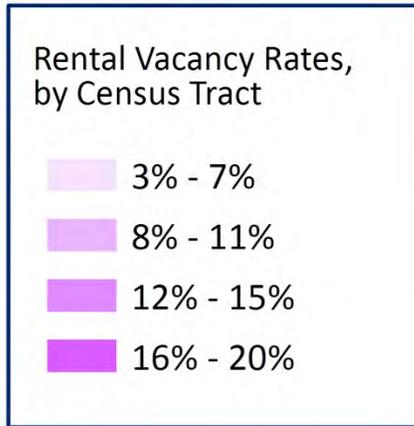
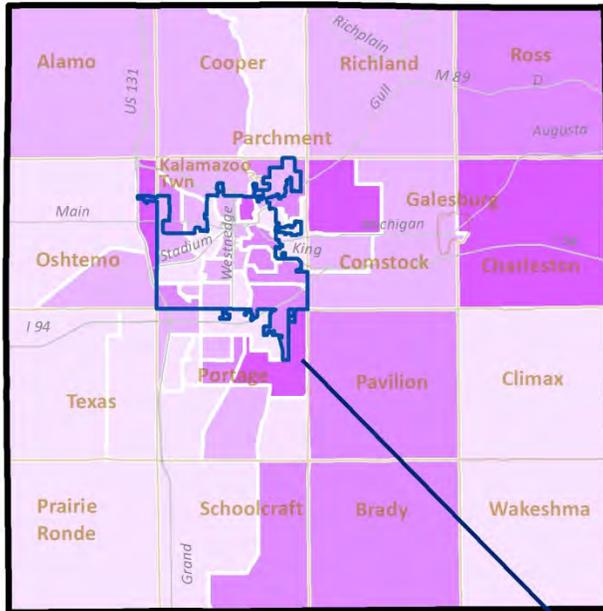


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007 to 2011. HC03\_VC197. Households Paying 35% or More of Income for Rent.

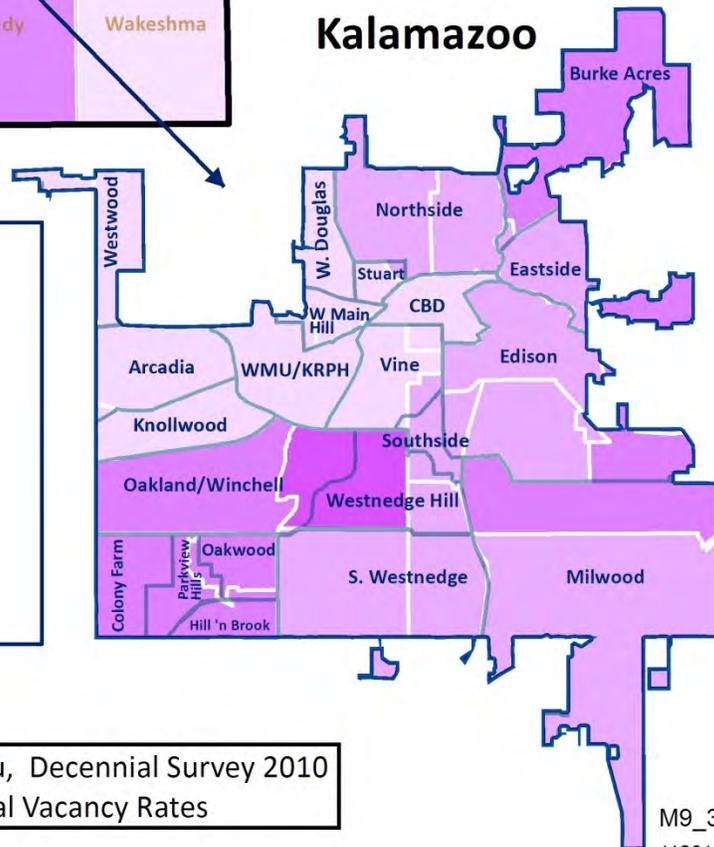
M9\_32b  
112613

## Rental Vacancy Rates

### Kalamazoo County



### City of Kalamazoo

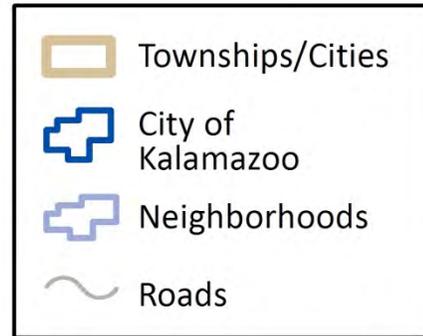


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Survey 2010  
 Variable: HD01\_S179, Rental Vacancy Rates

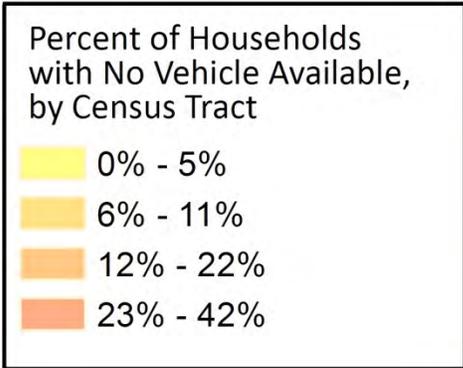
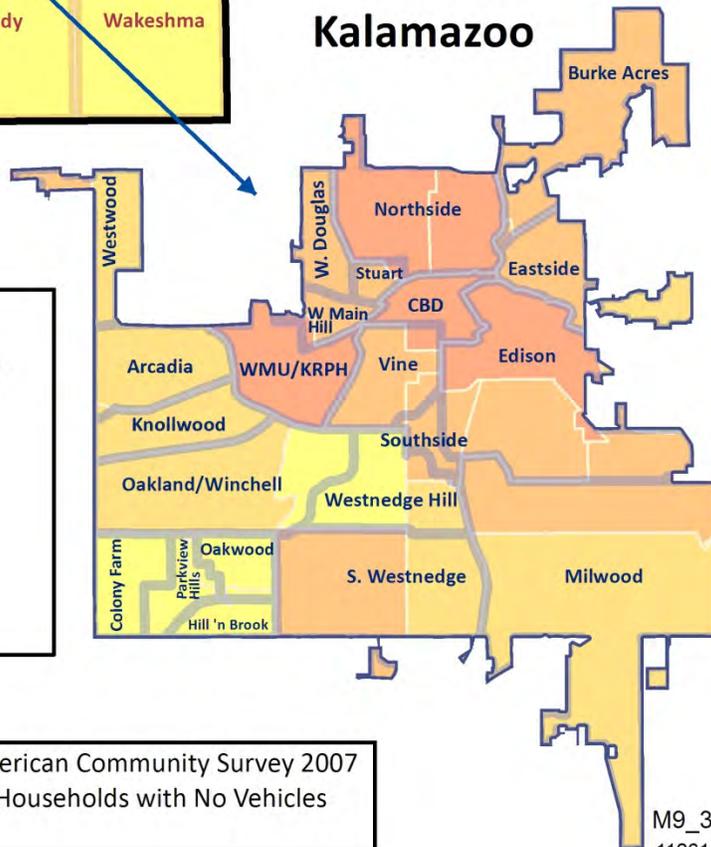
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## Percent of Households with No Vehicles Available

### Kalamazoo County



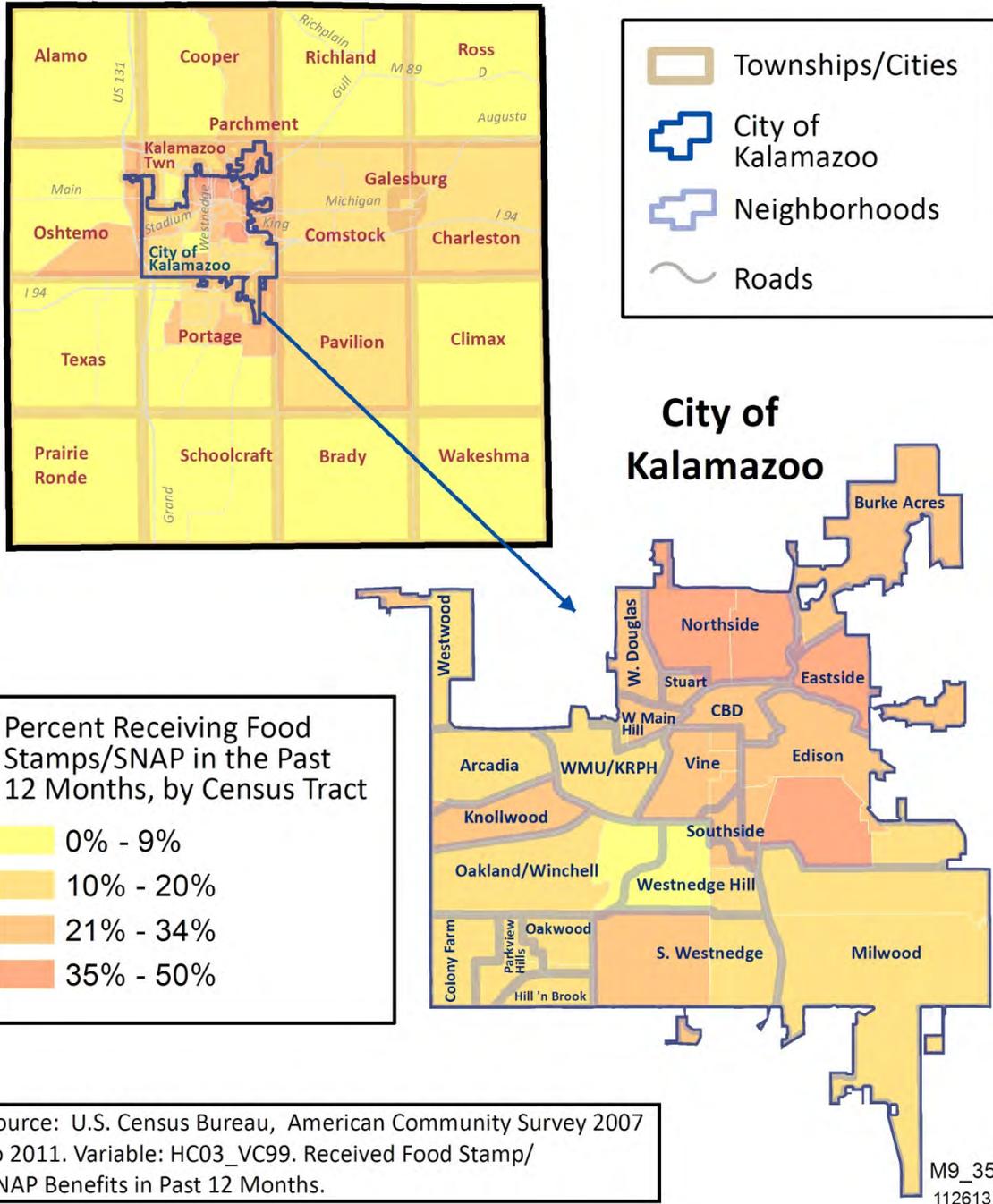
### City of Kalamazoo



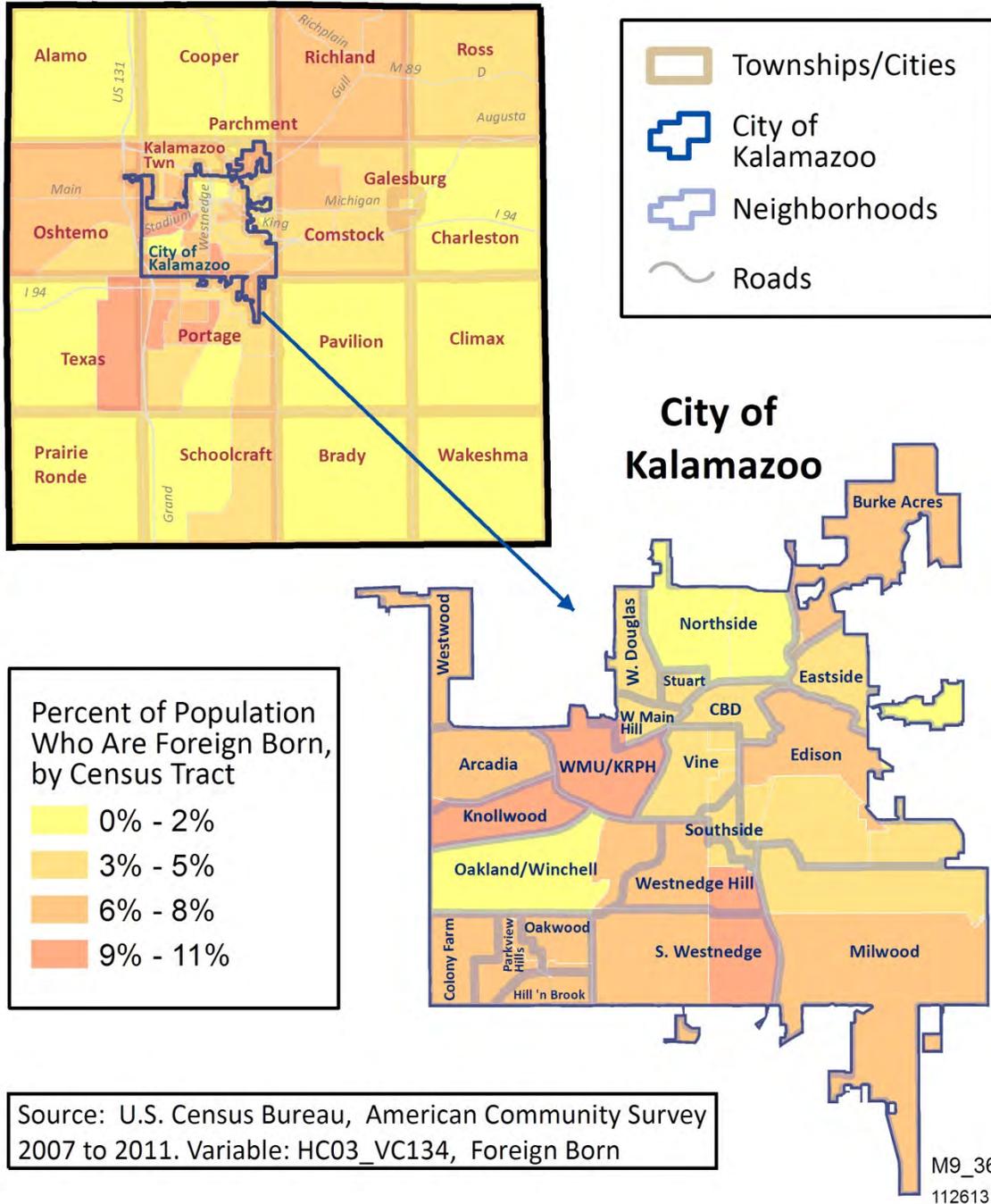
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007 to 2011. HC03\_VC82. Percent of Households with No Vehicles Available.

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112613

## Percent of Population Receiving Food Stamp/ SNAP Benefits in the Past 12 Months Kalamazoo County

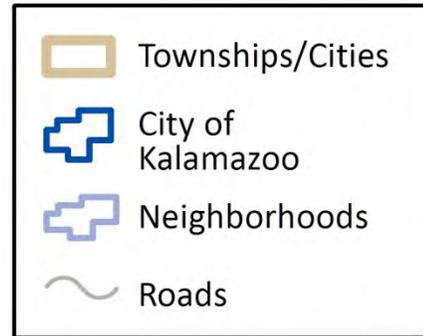


## Percent of Population Who Are Foreign Born Kalamazoo County

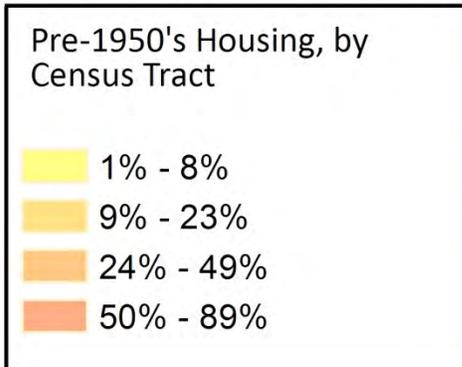
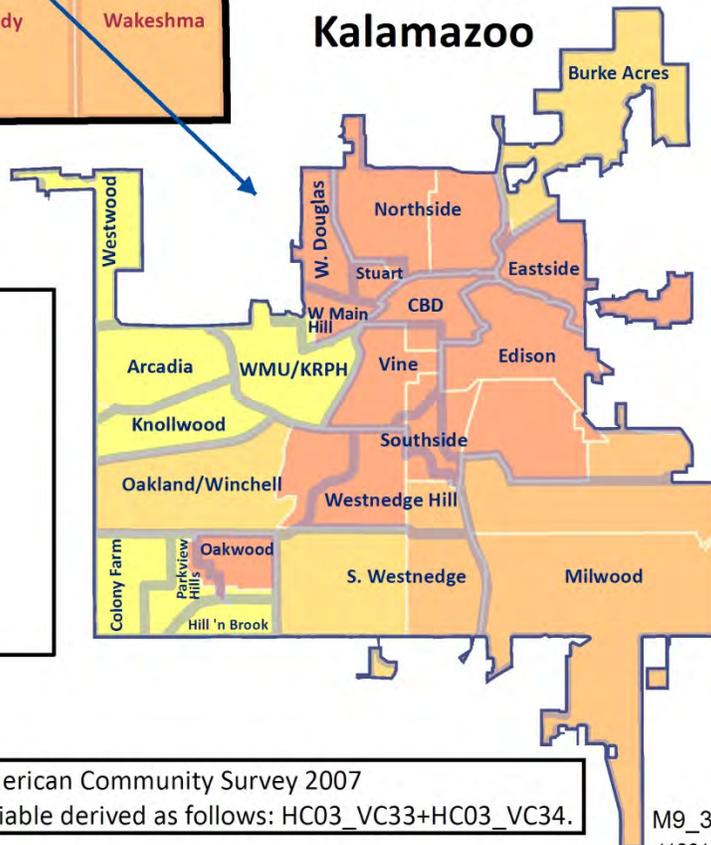


## Pre-1950's Housing

### Kalamazoo County



### City of Kalamazoo



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007 to 2011. Pre-1950's Housing. Variable derived as follows: HC03\_VC33+HC03\_VC34.

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