Poverty Study for the City of Toledo and Lucas County

Proposal submitted by
The Jack Ford Urban Affairs Center,
University of Toledo
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Background

On average, residents of Ohio are poorer than the nation as a whole. Census data show that the poverty rate in the state is 14.6 percent, slightly higher than the national rate of 14.0 percent. Since the 1960s, the poverty rate in the state has tracked closely with the national average. From the 1960s to about 2005, the state's poverty rate was slightly lower than the national average, but since then, the state's poverty rate has edged slightly higher than the average for the country.

A report prepared by the Ohio Development Services Agency (ODSA, 2018), released in February 2018, included a particularly striking map that showed two areas of concentrated poverty at the county level (see Figure 1). The first is centered around southeast Ohio, comprising Perry, Highland, Pike, Winton, Athens, Morgan, Jackson, Adams, Scioto, Gallia, and Meigs Counties, in the region of the state known as Appalachian Ohio. The second is Lucas County. These twelve counties have recorded the highest percentages of poverty with 20.0 percent to 31.2 percent of their residents living in poverty compared to 15.4 percent for the state as a whole (ODSA, 2018).

At the city level, the most recent data from the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year estimates show that the poverty rates in Ohio's largest cities have increased over the past two decades. Data from ACS 2007-2010 and ACS 2011-2016 show that between these two reporting periods, for all 86 Ohio cities with populations greater than 20,000, 75 saw increases in poverty between 1999 and the 207-2010 reporting period. However, between ACS 2007-2010 and ACS 2011-2017, only 13 cities experienced significant increases in their poverty rate, and Toledo was one. During the same time period, there were significant increases in poverty in only four of the ten largest cities and Toledo was once again named.[1] The poverty rate in the city increased from 24.5 percent to 27.5 percent, significantly higher than the state average (U.S. Census, 2017).[2] With the exception of Parma, Toledo, like the other nine cities in this group, had a higher poverty rate than the county in which it is located.

Measured by a number of different indicators, Lucas County and Toledo have not done as well as other counties and cities in the state in reducing poverty rates over the last decade. In addition, Ohio falls

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[1]The other three cities were Cincinnati, Cleveland and Youngstown.
[2] As a point of comparison, Youngstown had the highest poverty rate among the top 10 cities in Ohio, at 38.0 percent.

slightly behind the national average, with a higher poverty rate at 14.6 percent, compared to the country as a whole, at 14 percent (U.S Census Bureau).
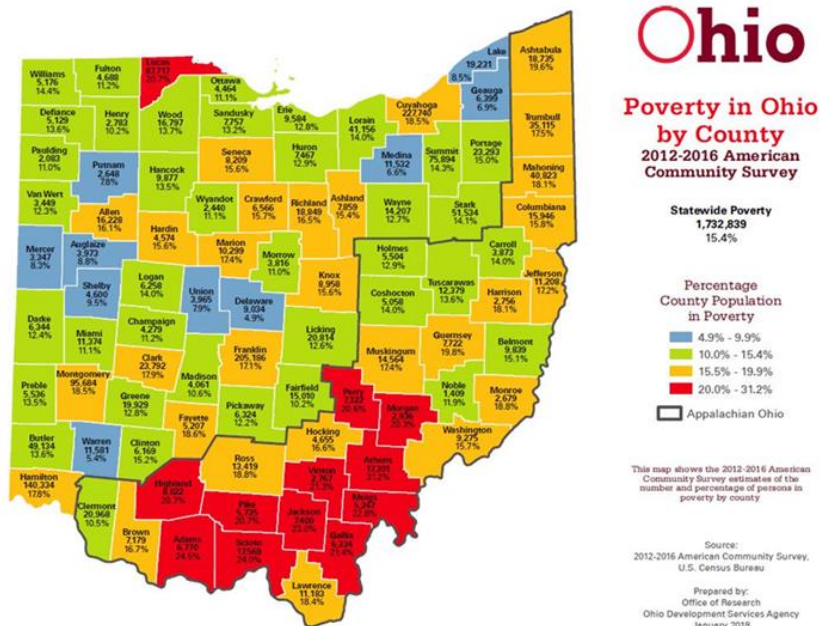

Figure 1: Poverty in Ohio by County
Source: ODSA, 2017

Project Requirements

Lucas County being identified as a high-poverty area within the state is a cause for concern for members of City Council and has raised several interconnected questions. Among them:

1. Why are high levels of poverty observed in the eight Appalachian counties and Lucas County, two seemingly disparate parts of the state? Why in these areas only?
2. What is the composition and spatial distribution of the population living in poverty in Toledo and Lucas County?
3. What are the particular characteristics of Lucas County and Toledo that have led to their inclusion on this list of high-poverty counties?
4. What might be an initial set of policy responses to this level of poverty that are effective in the short and long term?

Project Objectives

We propose a four-part approach to meet these requirements and deepen our understanding of the prevalence of poverty in Lucas County and the City of Toledo.

Phase 1: Analysis of the Ohio Poverty Report

- Conduct a deep dive into the numbers in the Ohio Poverty Report (ODSA, 2018) to understand the dimensions of poverty in Lucas County in Toledo as outlined in the report, as well as categories of analysis.

Phase 2: Mapping and demographic analysis of the poverty population in Toledo and Lucas County

- Analyze the spatial distribution of poverty in the city and county using census data.
- Determine any correlations with demographic and other variables.

Phase 3: Qualitative analysis of poverty in Toledo and Lucas County and connecting to existing efforts

- Conduct interviews representatives from a sample of organizations that work with issues of poverty and provide services to the poor in the city and county, focusing particularly on their clients living in poverty.[3]
- Analyze the interview data for any common themes.

Phase 4: Case Studies

- Undertake two case studies of peer cities to draw any policy lessons and evaluate them for applicability to the Toledo-Lucas County context.

Project Deliverables

Upon completion of the project, the Jack Ford Urban Affairs Center will produce a report with an executive summary. We can also present the work to the city. Per the University of Toledo policy, UT will retain the copyright to the report. The City of Toledo will receive unlimited rights to distribute copies of the report.

Project Timeline

Start date: TBD (in consultation with Council and staff)

Projected length: 15 weeks

Management Plan

The project will be housed at the Jack Ford Urban Affairs Center at the University of Toledo. The Center's mission is to enhance the economic vitality and quality of life of Toledo and its metropolitan

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[3] Among such organizations are local hospitals, government departments or entities that work at the city or county levels, faith-based organizations, Toledo Public Schools, local non-profits serving disadvantaged populations such as Connecting Meals to Kids, Pathways, the Zepf Center, Brothers United, the YWCA/YMCA, etc.   These will be chosen in consultation with Council staff.

region. This project will be managed by Professors Sujata Shetty and Daniel J. Hammel with assistance from students in the Department of Geography and Planning. We expect to work in close collaboration with City Council staff.

Co- leads:

Sujata Shetty is Interim Director of the Jack ford Urban Affairs Center and a professor in the Department of Geography and Planning, University of Toledo. She has worked as an architect and as an urban planner concentrating on community-based planning, research and evaluation, including several projects in Detroit. Most recently, her research has focused on the planning challenges facing mid-sized cities in the U.S. industrial midwest, particularly cities facing population loss.

Daniel Hammel is professor and chair of the Department of Geography and Planning. He is an urban geographer with over 20 years of experience in conducting research on neighborhood change. Most recently, he has focused on issues in legacy cities like Toledo.

Students: Two graduate students and support staff.

Budget

Student salaries:	$15,250
Faculty support:	$3000
Overheads:	$1825
Total:	$20,075

References

ODSA Ohio Development Services Agency. 2018. Ohio Poverty Report.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2012. American Community Survey, 2007-2011.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2017. American Community Survey, 2012-2016.