



ECONOMIC FACTBOOK

A SUMMARY OF CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

The Communities of Genesee County

July 2019

Forward **Together**
A Shared Vision for Economic Prosperity

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Forward Together is an unprecedented and community-driven effort to establish a common economic vision that will drive Genesee County communities forward. The vision will be presented in the form of an Economic Vitality Action Agenda. The Action Agenda, will include a community-derived vision statement for economic vitality. It will seek to integrate the findings, goals and recommendations from other community planning processes while also filling gaps in research and analysis that has not been performed. It will include a collection of recommendations (projects, policies and programs) that, when taken together, will help drive our community toward its vision for economic prosperity. For more information, visit:

www.ForwardTogetherGenesee.org

This report provides background information to assist with the development of the Economic Vitality Action Agenda for Genesee County Communities.

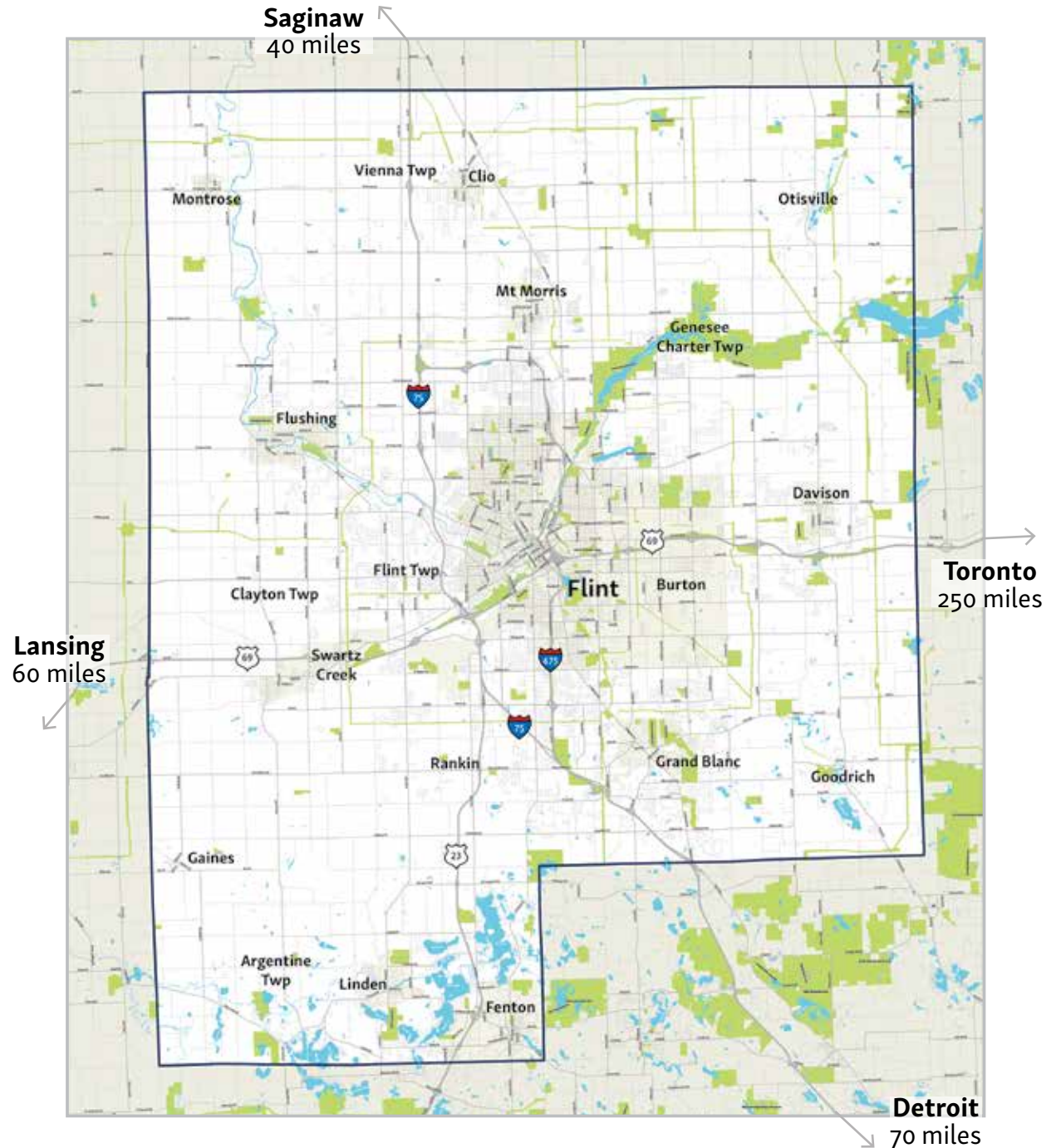
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The data used in this document have been sourced throughout. Many of the findings reference the American Communities Survey (ACS), 2017. This is an ongoing survey that provides vital information on a yearly basis about our nation and its people. Using the decennial census as a base, the ACS uses statistical sampling to determine the movement of census counts in between the full count that occurs every ten years. The data are continually collected throughout non-census years, increasing the overall pool within the sample. Although these data will never provide exact accuracy of the full count census, it provides the clearest, most up-to-date picture of key demographic and economic phenomena. This is especially important in 2019, as numbers from the 2010 census are close to a decade old.

For questions please contact:
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ECONOMIC FACTBOOK

The Economic Factbook provides an overview of existing, economic conditions and trends. It draws upon other readily-available data sources such as the U.S. Census and 2017 American Community Survey. The Factbook will be used to initiate conversations about the economic future and help identify topics where more detailed analysis should be undertaken. It is organized into three sections, representing the interconnected economic drivers:

1. TALENT

The talent section examines key demographic trends within Genesee County communities that are relevant to economic vitality.

Key Findings:

- ▶ Genesee County's population is shrinking, and the most desired workforce group has decreased significantly (p. 4)
- ▶ The County is becoming more diverse (p. 5)
- ▶ Educational attainment is up (p. 6)
- ▶ Unemployment rates are down (p. 7)
- ▶ Fewer people are currently in the workforce or in search of a job (p. 7)
- ▶ The workforce is aging with key industries having a majority of their workforce that is aged 45 and over (p. 7)
- ▶ Many jobs are at-risk for automation (p. 7)

2. BUSINESS

The business section examines the health and diversity of the local economy along with prosperity of individuals and families.

Key Findings:

- ▶ Employment in the County is mixed, and the major industries are shifting (p. 8)
- ▶ The Health industry is booming and expected to expand (p. 8)
- ▶ The "gig" economy, or self-employed people, contribute significantly to the number and diversity of jobs that exist in Genesee County (p. 9)
- ▶ Genesee County households are earning less than the State of Michigan as a whole (p. 12)
- ▶ The burden of housing cost and low wages in the County are a concern, and many are still unable to afford basic needs (p. 12)

3. PLACE

The place section examines the County as a place to live, work and play. This includes an assessment of the built and natural environment.

Key Findings:

- ▶ Genesee County is geographically well-positioned and accessible (p. 13)
- ▶ The highways and Bishop International Airport are major assets (p. 13)
- ▶ Funding is a challenge (p. 14)
- ▶ The County has desirable amenities and features—public transportation, a large public parks and trails system, several municipalities with downtowns, and a diverse arts and culture community (p. 17)



1. TALENT

Genesee County’s population is experiencing a decline, and the workforce is aging. Educational attainment is mixed throughout its diverse population.

Population

Genesee County’s population is shrinking. There are currently around 410,881 people in Genesee County, a nearly six percent loss since 2000.

"Flint has lost on average 19,000 people per decade since 1980. No other local unit of government in Genesee County has a fraction of the continued loss realized in Flint."

The City of Flint has experienced even greater decline, a nearly 22 percent loss since 2000. According to the Genesee County Metropolitan Planning Commission (GCMPC), Flint has lost an average of 19,000 people per decade since 1980. No other local unit of government in Genesee County has a fraction of the continued loss realized in Flint.¹ It is projected that the County’s population will continue on a downward trajectory.

The most desired workforce group has decreased significantly in size. Some of the greatest decreases in the County were in the age groups that are considered the most effective in the workforce (25 to 44 years old). The 25- to 34-year-old population saw a nearly 20 percent decrease, and the 35- to 44-year-old population saw a 29 percent decrease. From 2000 to 2017, the only age groups that grew in Genesee County were the 55 to 64 years old range and the 65 years and older range. All other age groups decreased.

**25- to 34-year-old
Population Change
-20%**

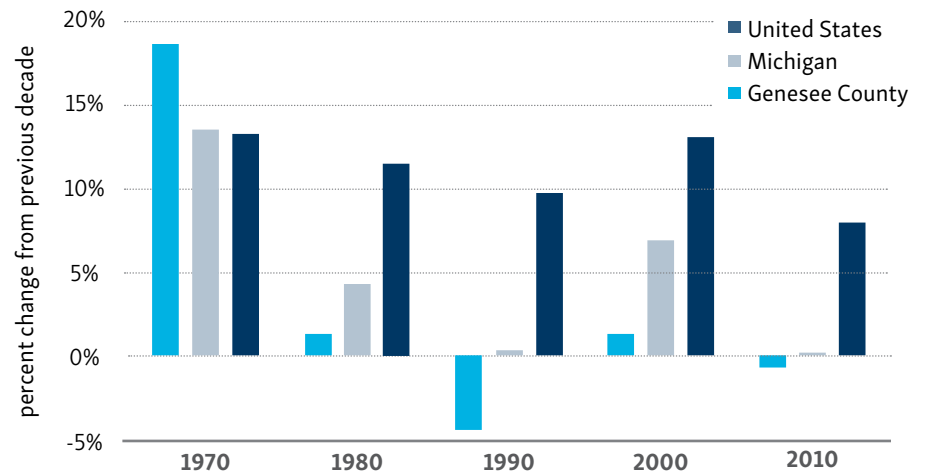
**35- to 44-year-old
Population Change
-29%**

Table 1: Recent Population Change, 2000-2017

	2000	2017	Change	% Change
Flint	124,943	97,810	-27,133	↓ -21.72%
Genesee County	436,141	410,881	-25,260	↓ -5.79%
Michigan	9,938,444	9,925,568	-12,876	↓ -0.13%
United States	281,421,906	321,004,407	39,582,501	↑ 14.07%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and Census 2000

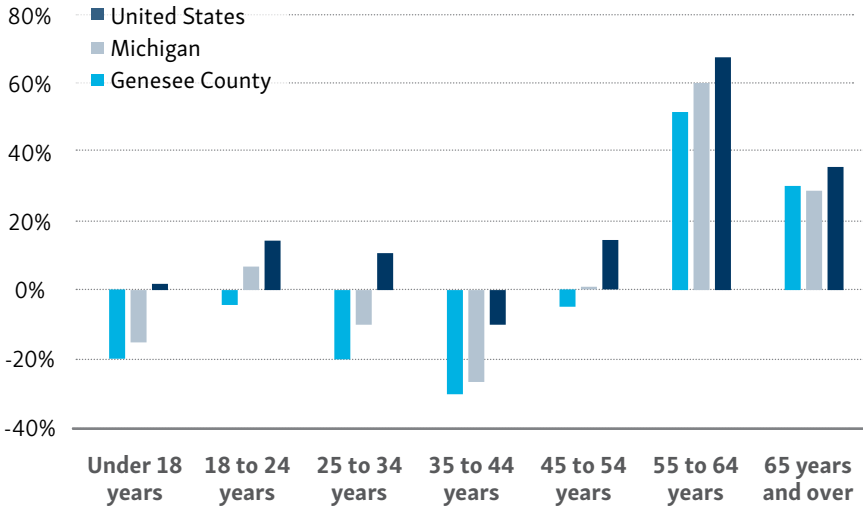
Figure 1: Historic Population Change by Decade, 1970-2010



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and Census 2000

¹Genesee County Model Update Technical Report

Figure 2: Percent Change in Age Distribution, 2000-2017



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and Census 2000

Rates of fertility are decreasing. Since 2005, both the City of Flint and Genesee County have seen significant decreases in the number of women, ages 15 to 50, that have had births in the past 12 months. In the County, the number of births dropped by nearly 31 percent. In Flint, the number of births dropped by almost half.²

Genesee County has smaller households and fewer overall. From 2000 to 2017, both the State and the Nation saw an increase in number of households; while Flint and Genesee County saw a decrease. The County had a nearly two percent decrease in households, and Flint saw a greater decrease of 18 percent. The City of Flint is experiencing decreases in all household sizes.

Table 2: Women with Births in the Past 12 Months (Ages 15-50)

	2005	2017	Change	% Change
Flint	2,611	1,344	-1,267	↓ -48.53%
Genesee County	6,958	4,826	-2,132	↓ -30.64%
Michigan	144,404	120,630	-23,774	↓ -16.46%
United States	4,247,399	3,994,223	-253,176	↓ -5.96%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Diversity

Genesee County is becoming more diverse. Since 2000, the County has experienced increases in their Asian population and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander population. However, the County has seen decreases in all other races (White, Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, and Some Other Race). In Genesee County, 75 percent of the population is White, and 21 percent is Black or African American.

The Hispanic/Latinx population is growing. Like the State and Nation, Genesee County has experienced increases in their Hispanic/Latinx population—an increase of over 25 percent since 2000. The County also saw a nearly 11 percent increase its Foreign-Born population. But, unlike the State and the Nation, Genesee County has seen a decrease in their populations that speak a language other than English at home.

²Daniel Grossman and David Slusky, "The Effect of an Increase in Lead in the Water System on Fertility and Birth Outcomes: The Case of Flint, Michigan"



Education Attainment

Literacy skills are low, and high school dropout rates high. According to the University of Michigan-Flint (UM-Flint), literacy is a problem among youth and adults in the community.³ The Literacy Network states that up to ten percent of adult residents live with low literacy skills, and 29 percent of fourth graders read below the State’s standard in reading—limiting the child’s and the County’s potential for future growth and

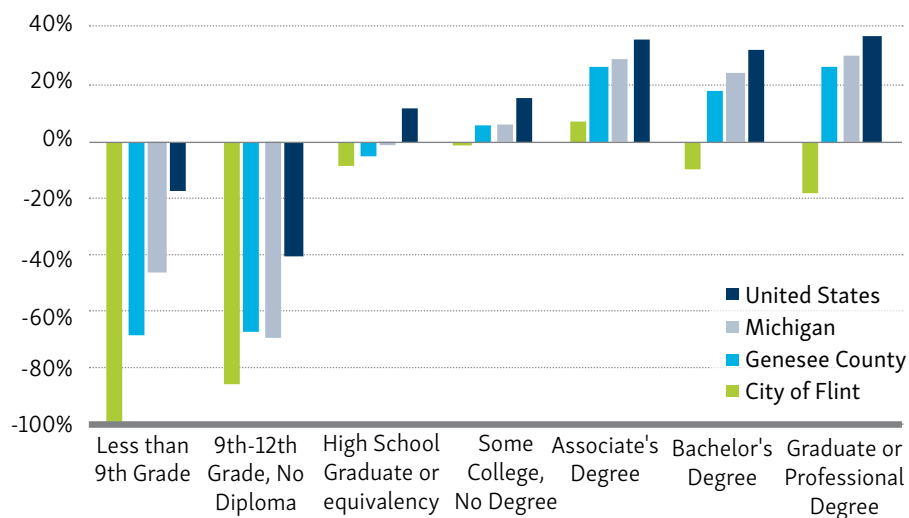
"In 2013, 36 percent of adults aged 25 and older, in Flint, were considered functionally illiterate—meaning they lack the literacy necessary for coping with most jobs and many everyday situations."

prosperity. In 2013, 36 percent of adults aged 25 and older, in Flint, were considered functionally illiterate—meaning they lack the literacy necessary for coping with most jobs and many everyday situations.⁴ The Literacy Network also reports on the link between low literacy rates and incarceration, stating, “Michigan’s economy would see a combination of crime-related savings and additional revenue of about \$280 million each year if the male high school graduation rate increased by just five percent.”⁵

Educational attainment is up in the County. Of the population 25 years and over, both the City of Flint and Genesee County are experiencing a increase in the number of people who completed high school. Flint and the County have both seen an increase in number of people with an Associate’s degree, and the County has seen an increase in both the number of people with a Bachelor’s degree (up nearly 18 percent, since 2000) and an increase in those with a Graduate or Professional degree (up almost 26 percent, since 2000). The City of Flint, however, has seen a decrease in those with a Bachelor’s degree (negative ten percent) and Graduate or Professional degree (-18 percent). Most in Genesee County stated their highest-level education was a high school diploma or some college with no degree.

Men are more likely not to complete high school in Genesee County. In 2017, of Genesee County residents ages 18 to 24, 21 percent of males had not graduated from high school or an equivalent, compared to nearly 15

Figure 3: Percent Change in Education Attainment (2000-2017)



Source: American Community Survey, 2017 5-year estimates

percent of females. In the City of Flint, nearly 28 percent of males, ages 18 to 24, had not received a high school diploma or equivalent and 18 percent of females had not. These rates are higher than that of the State (15 percent for males and nearly 11 percent for females) and the United States (15 for males and 11 percent for females).

Genesee County has important Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) talent pipelines. The County’s three colleges—one community college and two four-year degree schools—are important talent pipelines to support the economy. Federal IPEDS data show that business and professional education is the primary focus for students at the County’s higher education institutions. Kettering is the leading engineering program, and UM-Flint is the largest source of biology graduates. Mott Community College’s two largest programs are Engineering and Computer Sciences.

³ UM-Flint News (2016), "UM-Flint Helps Flint and Genesee Literacy Network Gain Momentum," <https://news.umflint.edu/2016/01/08/10478/>

⁴ Imagine Flint Master Plan (2013)

⁵ Flint & Genesee County Literacy Network, Fact Sheet, <http://flintliteracynetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Literacy-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

Workforce

Unemployment rates are down. The Genesee County unemployment rate, which measures the percentage within the labor force that is currently without a job, was on a downward trend. In the State of Michigan and Genesee County, the unemployment rate is around five percent. In the City of Flint, it is nearly ten percent.⁶

Genesee County
Unemployment Rate
5.1%

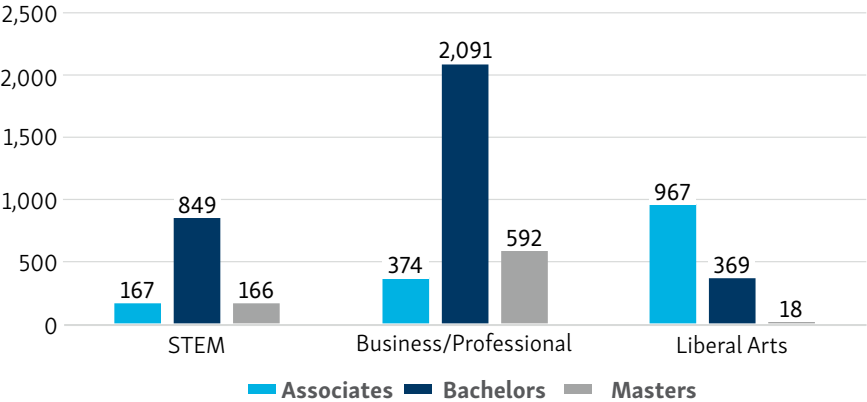
Labor force participation rates are also down. Labor force participation rates, for the population 16 years and older, refer to the total number of people or individuals who are currently employed or in search of a job. Since 2000, Michigan has seen a three percent decrease in labor force participation, but the County has seen a greater decrease. Genesee County has had a nearly six percent decrease in labor force participation. The number of available jobs has increased and this is projected to continue.

Genesee County's workforce is aging. Several key industries have substantial portions of their workforce aged 45 and over. Core industries, such as manufacturing and logistics, have a majority of workers over the age of 45. More importantly almost 30 percent of the overall workforce is 55 and over. Education has the oldest workforce and the highest percentage of workers requiring at least a bachelor's degree.

Many jobs are at risk because of automation. Another critical issue, identified by the Brookings Institute, is the risk of automation. Brookings projects that 26 percent of all jobs are at high risk for automation.⁷

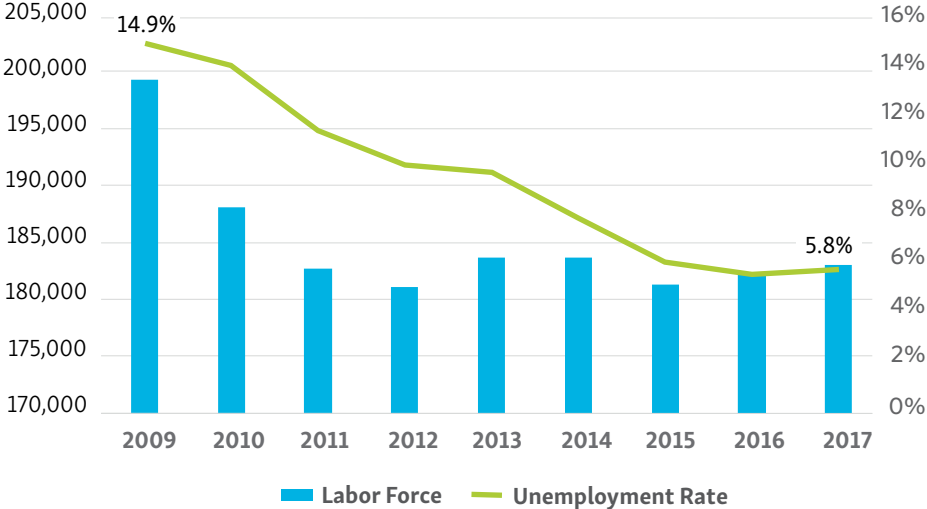
Majority of employees have at least a high school degree. Among employees over 29 throughout the County, 7.2% have completed less than high school, 22.4% have finished high school or equivalent, 26.2% have some college of Associate's degree, and 20.4% have a Bachelor's.⁸ degree or advanced degree.⁸

Figure 4: Talent Pipeline Degrees By Category IPEDS, 2016-2017



Source: NP Analysis of Department of Education IPEDS Completions dataset

Figure 5: Labor Force and Unemployment Rate



Source: NP Analysis of DOL Local Area Unemployment Statistics, ES202 data

⁶ Flint & Genesee Chamber of Commerce 2018-2020 Strategic Plan (2017)
⁷ Brookings, Jan. 2019
⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, Local Employment Dynamics (LED), 2015



2. BUSINESS

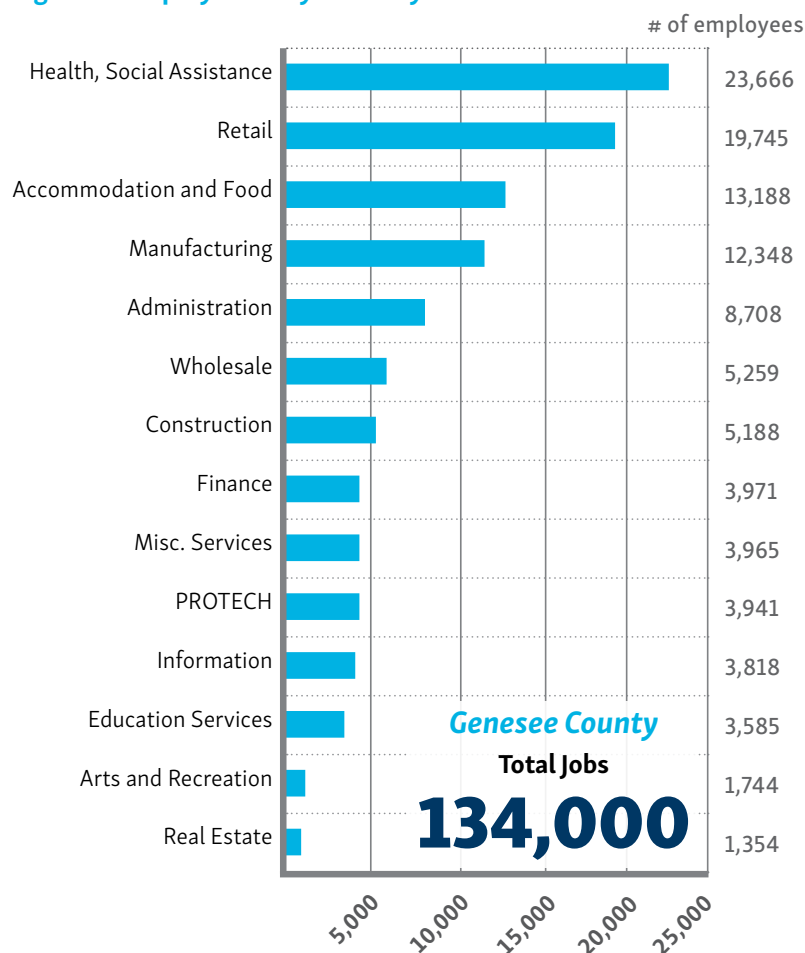
Major industries in the County are shifting away from manufacturing. The lower total number of individuals in the workforce is helping offset the County’s unemployment rate, and many people are self-employed—creating their own set of unique, diverse jobs.

Economy & Employment

Employment by industry in the County is diverse . Eighty-six percent of the employment is private employment concentrated in healthcare and retail. The key drivers for the largest industries include: the relative age, health status and needs of the community; disposable income in the community and visitors; and health of the auto market. Excluding healthcare, approximately five percent of Genesee County residents are employed in science and engineering occupations. Twenty-five percent of residents are in management and office occupations. This is roughly equal to the number of residents working in goods production and distribution occupations. The remainder of residents are employed in social and healthcare fields and 31 percent work in services. The highest paying jobs are currently Legal, Architecture and Engineering and Fire Fighting Supervisors. There is currently a shortage of trained workers in the skilled trades sectors.⁸

The major industries are shifting. Based on Genesee County’s 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan’s, employment opportunities will improve by 16 percent over the next 30 years. Much like the national trend, Genesee County is shifting from manufacturing, retail, and wholesale jobs to service industry jobs. The medical field is a booming industry. As Genesee County’s elderly population increases, so will the need for health field support workers. The major projected changes in employment from 2014 to 2045, include: a 12 percent decrease in manufacturing, 23 percent increase in transportation and public utilities, 11 percent decrease in retail trade, 14 percent decrease in wholesale Trade, and a 36 percent increase in services.

Figure 6: Employment by Industry



⁸ Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019)

Source: NP analysis Michigan Labor Market Information, 2017

Declining government jobs are keeping employment numbers down.

Employment is up six percent since the employment low in 2010. However, it is still below the 2007 employment level. Private employment is up substantially, by almost 12,000 jobs. Declining government employment has kept employment levels down—representing over 75 percent of the job decrease since 2007. The total number of individuals in the workforce has also decreased by 17,000, which is helping to offset the fact that job levels are still below those from ten years ago.

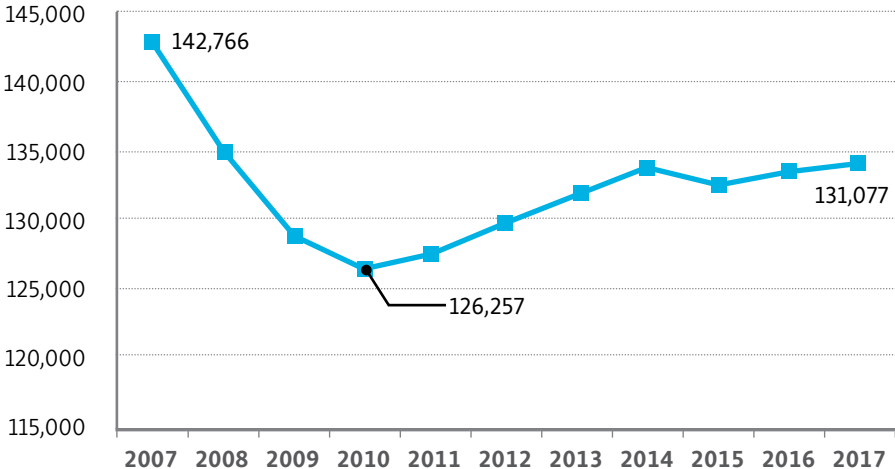
Self-employed workers are an asset and contribute significantly to the mix of industries. Traditional employment data often exclude self-employed owner operators and 1099 contractors, generally referred to as the “gig” economy. This labor market includes short-term contracts or freelance work, a less traditional but increasing diverse and popular job route. Approximately 50,000 jobs exist in the County would be considered a part of the gig economy.

Many of the County’s industries have not recovered fully since the recession. Establishment change is the most basic level of analyzing Genesee County’s entrepreneurship. This refers to the change of number of businesses in the area. Over a ten-year period, Genesee County is down over 1,100 establishments. Since the recession of 2008, the County has lost over 600 establishments. Most of the losses have been industries, such as construction and retail, which are largely dependent on the local population and disposable income.

*Establishments Lost
Over a Ten-year Period*

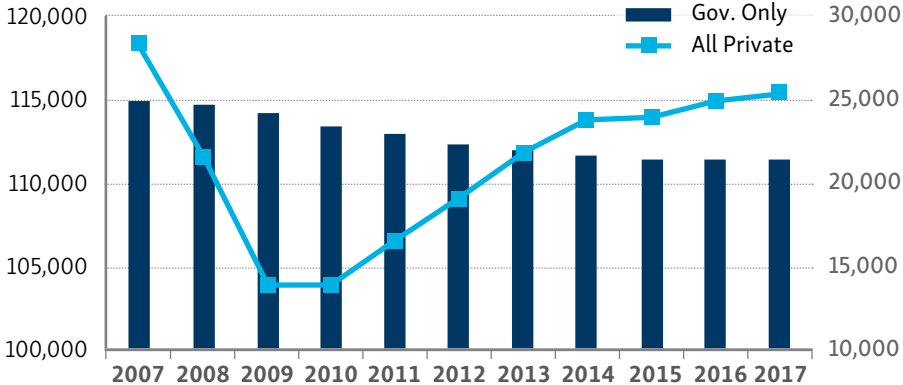
1,100

Figure 7: Total Employment of County



Source: NP analysis Michigan Labor Market Information, 2017
*Does not include self employment

Figure 8: Private and Government Employment



Source: NP analysis ES 202 Michigan Labor Market Information, 2017



Most of the existing jobs are in urban areas. Every municipality in the County is projected to experience employment growth over the 30-year period. The highest employment growth is projected to occur in the City of Flint and surrounding jurisdictions.⁹ Flint is the largest employment hub in the Genesee County region. Flint is also at the center of a growing health sector, anchored by Hurley Medical Center, McLaren Regional Medical Center, Genesys Regional Medical Center and Diplomat Pharmacy. The City lost nearly 23,000 jobs between 2002 and 2010; however, the City is still responsible for one-third of total employment in the County.¹⁰ Unlike many communities in the County, Flint’s daytime population (125,750) is larger than its resident population. The number of people commuting to Flint for work is nearly double the number of Flint residents leaving the community for work on a daily basis.

Many are traveling outside the County for work. The County’s inflow/outflow measures the movement of the region’s workforce. Inflow represents people coming into the area to work from outside the County. Outflow measures residents leaving the area to work somewhere else. The inflow / outflow analysis shows that approximately 53,000 people commute into Genesee County. Roughly 73,000 County residents stay in the County to work. A nearly equal number, 72,000, leave the County for employment elsewhere. Examining distance and direction, the majority of these residents are heading toward Oakland County and Detroit.

Many are creating their own employment. Business starts are another measure of the County’s entrepreneurship. Unfortunately, the data lags by several years but trends can be indicative of the overall propensity to start businesses. However, this does not provide a complete perspective. As noted earlier, approximately 50,000 people are either self-employed or participate in the “gig” economy. Analyzing data, residents of Genesee County create their own jobs out of necessity but a large percentage return to more “stable” employment when possible.

Figure 9: Job Counts by Distance / Direction, all workers, 2015

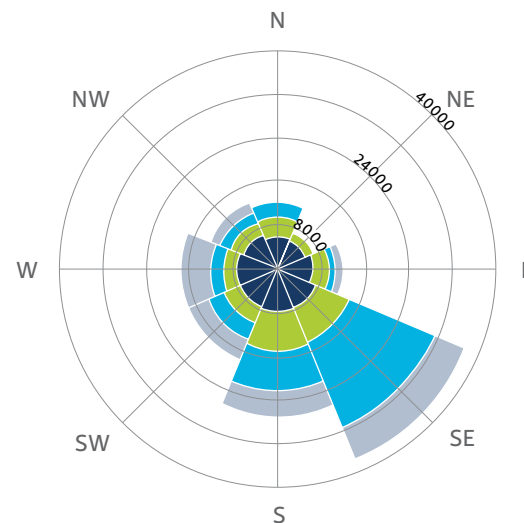
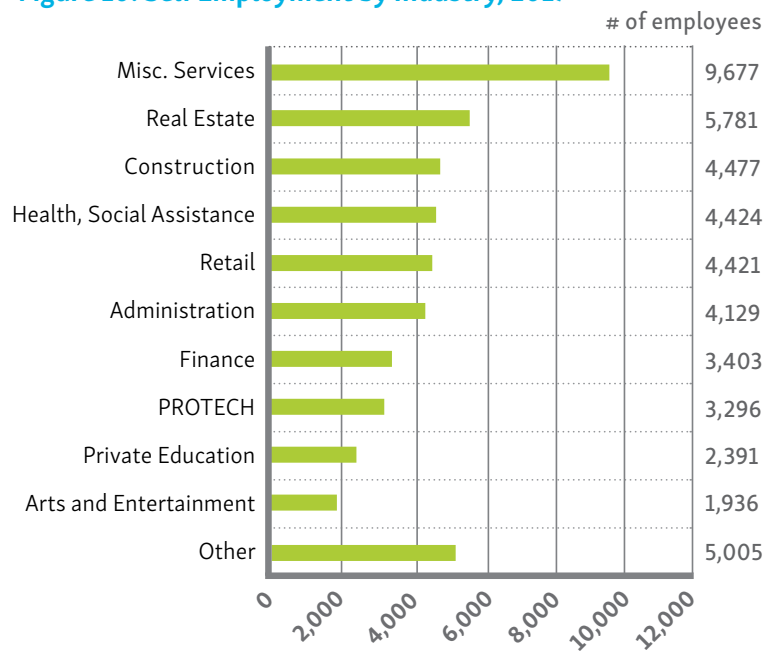


Figure 10: Self Employment by Industry, 2017



⁹ Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019)

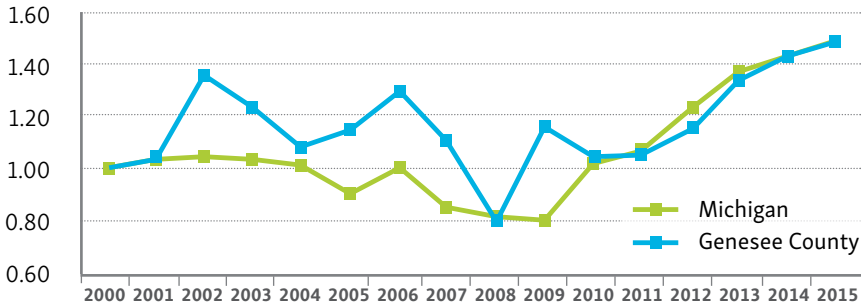
¹⁰ Imagine Flint Master Plan (2013)

Source: NP analysis of Bureau of Economic Analysis County-level data 2017 & ES202 data

The County has many creative makers with a focus on design. Innovation has been a focus of economic development activity over the last several years. Measuring it is extremely difficult because of its broad definition. ETSY and Kickstarter are two online platforms that give insight into the “maker” economy, which links the innovation and creative economy with business startups and the self-employed. ETSY is an online marketplace that provides the ability to track self-designated handmade products by self-identified communities. Kickstarter is a crowdfunding tool. Other methods exist, but these are smaller and more difficult to determine project location. The number of artisans and makers these represent is difficult to determine. However, the relative number of products, as well as the distribution of across categories is a strong indicator of the maker community and where the interest is. Analysis of ETSY and Kickstarter shows the maker community exists across the County, and costume jewelry is typically the largest category of products being produced with a substantial fashion/design driven element. Kickstarter shows 189 project proposals (funded and unfunded) indicating there is substantial interest in media content creation in the County. Kickstarter also shows there is interest in food and fashion categories. Flint is relatively active compared to other cities in Michigan (excluding Detroit). Based on the review of ETSY and Kickstarter, it is clear that Genesee County’s maker community is diverse; but has a distinct emphasis on design-driven segments and artist-oriented activities.

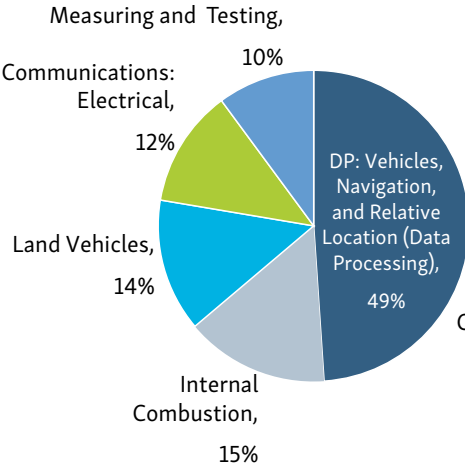
The number of local innovators is up, as well as the number of patents but many are in a shrinking technology. Patents are the most frequently used indicator of technological innovation. Genesee County ranks 8th in Michigan for total patents from 2000 to 2015 (latest available comparative data). Automotive related technologies are key pieces as well as communications and data processing related to vehicles. One of the more interesting aspects of the area’s patent activity is over the 2011 to 2015 timeframe patents assigned to individuals are the 2nd largest category of recipients rather than companies. This may represent a group of local innovators that are pursuing research and development opportunities.

Figure 11: Patent Growth Base



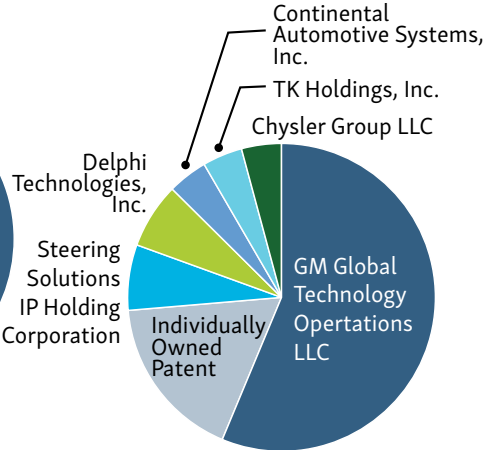
Source: NP analysis US Patent Office, Geographic Breakdown

Figure 12: Top 5 Patent Technology Classes, 2011-2015



Source: NP analysis US Patent Office, Patents by Geography and Patent Class

Figure 13: Patent Assignees, 2011-2015



Source: NP analysis US Patent Office, Patent Assignees by Geography



Personal Prosperity

Genesee County households are earning less than the State of Michigan.

The median household income in Genesee County is about \$43,000 (17 percent lower than Michigan), with 34 percent of households earning

"In 2017, the median household income in the City of Flint was 41 percent less than the County and 50 percent less than the State."

between \$35,000 to \$75,000. Many households in the City of Flint are earning less than \$35,000, while the rest of the County is typically earning above \$35,000.¹¹ In 2017, the median household income in the City of Flint was 41 percent less than the County and 50 percent less than the State.¹²

The majority of renters are burdened by the cost of housing or rent.

Over 65% of Flint residents who rent are cost burdened, meaning they are contributing more than 30 percent of their income to rent. Renters are more vulnerable, with 57 percent of renting families living below the poverty level.

Residents report barriers to homeownership. Upon reviewing a housing study conducted for the I-69 Thumb Region which includes Genesee County, four general characteristics stand out that lenders review when determining how much to loan for housing—income, debt, funds available for a down payment, and credit score. The study noted that credit scores are rebounding. However, many looking to purchase or rent a house lack an eligible credit score (720 or better). Many still hold large amounts of debt from credit cards, student loans, and car loans, as well as lack of savings for a down payment.¹³ From 2000 to 2017, the City of Flint’s rental rate has mirrored Genesee County—rising slightly by two percent. However, homeownership in Flint has decreased 20 percent, a 15 percent difference from the County’s five percent loss of homeownership.

Many in the County are struggling to afford basic needs. In Genesee County, nearly 14 percent of households are living in poverty, compared to Michigan’s rate of nearly 11 percent and the United States’ rate of nine percent. Another factor to be considered when looking at affordable living is ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). ALICE, which was developed by the United Way, considers that there are many households which have incomes above poverty, but still struggle to afford basic needs.

- ▶ Approximately 21 percent of households in Genesee County are considered ALICE.
- ▶ This means that 35 percent of households are struggling to afford basic needs including decent housing.
- ▶ The County has a sizeable homeless population. Approximately 420 people or 288 households require housing services on any given night.¹⁴

Table 3: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months, 2000-2017

	2000	2017	Change	% Change
Flint	32,440	39,384	6,944	↑ 21.41%
Genesee County	56,480	81,280	24,800	↑ 43.91%
Michigan	1,021,605	1,510,841	489,236	↑ 47.89%
United States	33,899,812	45,650,345	11,750,533	↑ 34.66%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and Census 2000

¹¹ Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019)

¹² Imagine Flint Master Plan (2013)

¹³ Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019)

¹⁴ Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019)

3. PLACE

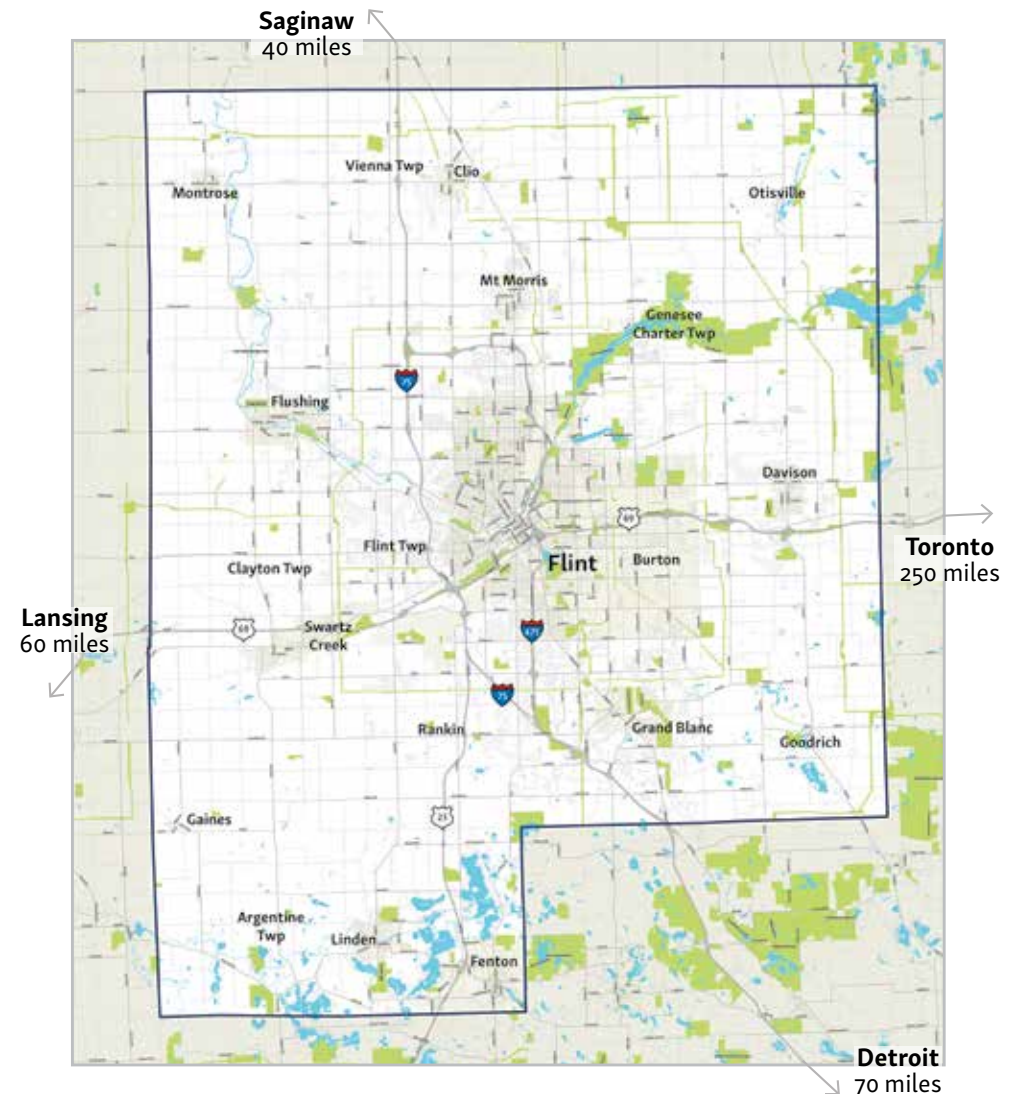
Genesee County is geographically well positioned and has major infrastructure assets. Funding for the necessary improvements is a challenge. Many of the County's roads are in poor condition; the lack of decent, affordable homes is a weakness; and K-12 education can be improved upon.

Geography & Land Use

Genesee County is central to a large and international region and population. Genesee County sits at the confluence of three major highways—I-75, US 23 and I-69—that connects Michigan to Ontario, Canada. The highways and airports are viewed by many to be major assets for the region and a possible avenue to attract investment if marketed appropriately. The Bishop International Airport (FNT), a critical transportation hub for Genesee County and the I-69 Thumb region, is a great asset to further promote.

- ▶ As the third largest airport in the State of Michigan, FNT has the capacity to expand services for transporting both cargo and passenger.¹⁵
- ▶ The Flint I-69 Trade Corridor provides 2,500 miles of linkage connecting over 750,000 individuals.
- ▶ Bishop International Airport serves 1 million passengers per year and growing.¹⁶

The County will continue to see changes in land distribution. Genesee County has a total area of 648 square miles. Approximately 638 square miles of it is land and ten square miles of it is water. Most of the land in the county is relatively flat, but the southern end is hilly and covered by several lakes. A recent planning process forecasted a 104 percent increase in residential, commercial and industrial land by 2040 if trends established in the 1980s and 90s were to continue. This would represent a 37 percent loss in farmland, wetlands and forested lands.¹⁷



¹⁵ Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019)

¹⁶ Imagine Flint Master Plan (2013)

¹⁷ Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019)



Infrastructure & Mobility

Many roads are in poor condition and short and long-term maintenance is a challenge. Michigan rates number four in the U.S. for roads in poor condition. Genesee County ranks number 48 out of 83 counties and spends \$16.6 million on average on local road projects per year. In 2016, 14 percent of road conditions were good; 53 percent were fair; and 33 percent were poor.

- ▶ The average cost per lane mile for full reconstruction is \$1.6 million, while Genesee County's partner agencies receive only \$16.6 million in grant funding to spend on road projects per year.
- ▶ According to Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019), approximately 79 percent of sidewalks need repair in Genesee County.
- ▶ Bridges and dams are also an area of concern. They are aging without a funding mechanism in place to meet maintenance needs.
- ▶ Thirty-five percent of 406 bridges in the County are over 50 years old. The typical lifespan of a bridge is 70 years.
- ▶ The cost to replace a 2-lane bridge is approximately \$1.5 million.¹⁸
- ▶ According to the Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019) Community Survey, when asking Genesee County residents what infrastructure improvements were needed most, respondents overwhelmingly supported road improvements with 70 percent agreeing

it was of one of the highest needs.

Residents consider broadband a necessity for improved quality of life and economic growth. Statewide, 40 percent of Michigan Internet users search for jobs online, including 55 percent of low-income Internet users. Michigan business establishments that use broadband report median annual revenues that are approximately \$300,000 higher than businesses that do not use broadband. Online sales in Michigan account for approximately \$9.2 billion in annual sales revenue, including nearly \$1.8 billion for small businesses with fewer than five employees and more than \$1.9 billion for rural Michigan businesses.¹⁹ According to the Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019) Community Survey, when asking Genesee County residents what was needed to improve quality of life, 47 percent of respondents felt access to high-speed internet was of one of the highest need.

Mass Transportation Authority (MTA) reports millions of passenger trips each year. In 2016, MTA ridership was reported to be 5.3 Million. MTA annual statistics report 618,000+ trips for medical services, 290,000+ rides to groceries, and 1.9+ million trips for employment each year. However, some feel that the current fixed routes are not meeting the needs of certain populations. Some stated that more routes to the out-county areas are needed to help residents reach employment sectors, as currently 26 percent of residents commute outside of the County to work. There are 13 of 14 MTA Routes that travel into Downtown Flint. The Downtown Flint transit hub is located well for MTA and their customers as well—10,000 people per day go through the center.²⁰ In Flint, the majority of households (67 percent) have at most one car—accessibility and mobility are essential components to the City's transportation network. MTA transit demand remains steady, while the demand for destination-specific commuter buses to regional employers or other cities is increasing beyond the capacity of the transit hub. New commuter bus facilities are needed proximate to the transit hub and park and ride facilities to meet demand.²¹

¹⁸ Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019)

¹⁹ Genesee County Technology Plan (2015)

²⁰ Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019)

²¹ Downtown Flint Gameplan (2019)

Housing Stock & Neighborhoods

Affordable housing is a challenge. There are 166,244 units of occupied houses in Genesee County. Types of housing include 80 percent single units, 15 percent multi-units and five percent mobile homes. Access to affordable housing is greatly influenced by the cost of owning or renting a house. Over 35 percent of home owners/renters in Genesee County spend over 30 percent of their salary on housing.²²

Growth in residential vacancy is happening faster than state trends. In 2017, Genesee County had a high number of vacant housing units (13 percent). In the City of Flint, 26 percent of housing units were vacant. From 2000 to 2017, Genesee County saw an increase of 82 percent in housing vacancy. In the City of Flint, residential vacancy has more than doubled since 2000 (nearly 110 percent increase). The Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019):

“It is important to mention vacancy in relation to affordable housing since vacant housing typically is focused in poverty-stricken communities that fail to improve even as other areas recover from the recession. As other areas improve, those impoverished areas fall further behind, widening the income disparity gap. This means that residents living in areas with higher vacancy housing units, such as Flint, have a much harder time finding decent affordable housing and sometimes are forced to stay.”

Table 4: Total Vacant Housing Units, 2000-2017

	2000	2017	Change	% Change
Flint	6,720	14,102	7,382	↑ 109.85%
Genesee County	13,805	25,120	11,315	↑ 81.96%
Michigan	448,618	679,554	230,936	↑ 51.48%
United States	10,424,540	16,567,643	6,143,103	↑ 58.93%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and Census 2000

Owner-occupied Housing Units

24%

require repair or financial assistance

Renter-occupied Housing Units

50%

require repair or financial assistance

Many housing units require repair or financial assistance. Most homes throughout Genesee County are in good condition while 15 percent need some extent of repair. However, when looking by municipality, many homes that require repair tend to be in low-income areas. About 24 percent of owner-occupied housing units and 50 percent of renter-occupied housing units have one or more conditions which require repair or financial assistance. These conditions include: 1. Lacks complete kitchen facilities, 2. Lacks complete plumbing facilities, 3. More than one person per room, and 4. Cost burden greater than 30 percent. The Genesee County Home Improvement Program—created to provide property owners with a Deferred Payment Loan (DPL) to make needed improvements to their homes—has rehabilitated 2,938 homes in the last 40 years.²³

²² Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019)

²³ Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019)



The Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA) is an effective initiative and is actively working to rebuild neighborhoods. In 1999, the Michigan State Legislature created a new, streamlined system for returning tax-reverted properties to productive use. This changed the way foreclosed properties were administered, by giving outright ownership of these properties to the local County Treasurer after two and a half years, instead of speculators or slumlords at auction. With this process, Michigan opened the door for Flint to reclaim, reinvest in, and rebuild their neighborhoods through the creation of the Genesee County Land Reutilization Council (LRC). In 2004, the LRC became the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA). Today, state governments across the country are approving land

"The Genesee County Land Bank demolishes roughly 1,000 dilapidated structures per year within Genesee County at an average cost of \$10,000 per demolition."

\$10,000 per demolition.²⁶

Neighborhood safety is a priority. According to a HUD report on Neighborhoods and Violent Crime, people rate a safe neighborhood as their top priority when choosing housing. Overall, many low-income areas throughout Genesee County, namely the City of Flint, have a higher crime rate than areas with higher median household incomes. The Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019) Community Survey reported, when asking Genesee County residents to select their top three reasons for choosing to live in their neighborhood, a majority selected safety as their primary reason.²⁷

bank legislation based on the success of the Genesee County model.²⁴ The Genesee County Land Bank currently owns roughly 13,802 properties: 192 commercial buildings, 4,546 residential homes, 338 commercial vacant lots, 8,441 residential vacant lots, and 33 other types of property.²⁵ The Genesee County Land Bank demolishes roughly 1,000 dilapidated structures per year within Genesee County at an average cost of

Schools

The State overall is out-performing Genesee County schools and the County is losing students. Overall, there are 21 public school districts in Genesee County and 14 charter schools. The County has 66,000 students going through K-12. Nearly 34 percent of students are proficient, when using the 3-8 M-STEP Proficiency, which is an assessment to measure student growth (compared to a state-wide rate of 38 percent). In 2016, the District saw a 23 percent decrease in student count, compared to a 12 percent decrease statewide—meaning the count decrease was almost double that of the State. Fifty-three percent of students receive free or reduced lunch (compared to 43 percent in Michigan). The 2015 graduation rate for the Genesee County Intermediate School District was 76 percent, compared to the State rate of 83 percent.

The County is home to several post-secondary institutions that collectively enroll thousands of students. Genesee County is also home to several colleges and universities including University of Michigan at Flint, Mott Community College, Kettering University, and Baker College. About 8,300 students attend UM-Flint, which has a 34 percent graduation rate; 10,500 student attend Mott Community College, which has a 43% graduation rate; and 2,327 attend Kettering University, which has a 57% graduation rate. Nearly 30,000 students are enrolled at Flint's four major college and universities. These populations have a significant influence on demand for retail goods and services throughout the community.²⁸

²⁴ Imagine Flint Master Plan (2013)

²⁵ Genesee County Land Bank (2019)

²⁶ Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019)

²⁷ Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019)

²⁸ Imagine Flint Master Plan (2013)

Attractions

Parks and recreational amenities are strong community assets. Over 11,000 acres of public park land and the 100+ mile network of non-motorized trails have been repeatedly mentioned as one of the County’s greatest assets. There were 49,000+ trips recorded on Genesee County trails in 2017.²⁹

The county is home to a number of large and small "Downtowns". Twenty-two out of 33 municipalities in Genesee County state they have what they consider to be a downtown. In Downtown areas throughout the County, 11 percent of space in Downtowns are vacant. Downtowns with a higher percentage of vacancies usually have a lower initial impression percentage.³⁰ In Downtown Flint, across all markets, the overall vacancy rate is 13 percent, but this is skewed by the absence of reported vacancy in the public and non-profit markets. In the private market, there is 673,000 square feet of reported vacancy, representing an overall vacancy rate of 21 percent.³¹

For its size, the county has strong and unique cultural assets. The county's cultural assets (like art museums, performing arts, etc.) create a regional draw. The Flint Institute of Music, as one example, attracts 300,000 visitors for instruction, programming and concerts.³² Galleries, museums and the planetarium are major attractions; and the County is home to Michigan's largest county park system and 21 golf courses.

Genesee County is attractive for large events, and hotel stays have increased as a result. Event planners are hosting conferences, corporate events, sporting events, meetings and leisure activities in the County. In 2017, 90 groups booked events, which helped tourism generate an economic impact of \$133 million. Hotel occupancy is also on the rise. The growth trend for hotel occupancy, average daily rates, market demand and overall revenue has grown over the past three years

" In 2017, 90 groups booked events, which helped tourism generate an economic impact of \$133 million."



²⁹ Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019)

³⁰ Genesee: Our County Our Future Comprehensive Plan (2019)

³¹ Downtown Flint Gameplan (2019)

³² Imagine Flint Master Plan (2013)

³³ Flint & Genesee Chamber of Commerce 2020: Building the Future (2017)

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