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Social and Economic Indicators Typifying the Community's Health

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W.E. UPJOHN INSTITUTE
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Social and Economic Indicators Typifying the Community's Health

Kalamazoo Community Foundation

Final Report

April 23, 2009

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Introduction and Challenge Statement

This social and economic indicators report is designed to assist the Kalamazoo Community Foundation in its ongoing strategic planning efforts. The indicators included were selected after careful consideration. We believe they provide the best available timely data on current trends and service gaps in the following four priority areas at the Foundation:

- **Individuals and Families** - *Building self-sufficiency through fundamental care and support*
- **Economic and Community Development** - *Enhancing quality of life and prosperity*
- **Youth Development** - *Nurturing and preparing our young people*
- **Early Childhood Learning and School Readiness** - *Preparing our children for success*

Overall, the indicators included in this report are meant to be used to “take the temperature” of the community. Like the human body, it is necessary to observe more than one indicator when monitoring the health and well-being of the community. Moreover, just like taking the temperature of a sick child, it is not the indicator that we should focus our attention on—except in extreme fevers—but instead on the causes of the high temperature. Like parents, community leaders want to treat the causes not the symptoms, and indicators presented in this report monitor symptoms.

The indicators are presented under the Foundation's four community investment priorities, and when possible, the associated focus area within each priority area.

Finally, in selecting the indicators we tried to adhere to the following guidelines:

1. The data are available on at least an annual basis with no more than a two-year time lag.
2. The data are not significantly affected by so-called “agency effects” which can occur when the delivery of services dramatically changes due to funding or effort. The classic example is when the crime rate statistic goes up in a neighborhood because of a greater public safety effort that captures criminal activity which previously went unreported. A more effective effort to feed hungry families may increase the number of families served, but that does not mean that the community has more hungry families than in the past.
3. The data are collected in a consistent manner.

4. When possible, we collected similar data for five similar communities (see below) to see if movements in the indicators are shared by the other geographical comparison areas or if the movement is unique to Kalamazoo.
5. Less is more. We tried to limit the number of indicators to the bare minimum. Still, we likely erred by including too many. While it is hard for us to argue that having too much data is bad, it can cloud decision-making.

It is ill-advised to use this report’s indicators as evaluation tools. Many factors can influence the movement of community social indicators, and it is impossible for one program to address all of them. An effective program, which positively impacts its targeted group on one these factors, will likely not have the scope or capability to impact the other factors. Therefore, an effective program may appear to have little overall impact. Feeding hungry kids breakfast is important for them to be ready to learn; however, parental involvement, quality instruction, a good peer environment, and a host of other factors are also important. Therefore, changes in the students’ performance in the MEAP is a poor evaluation tool for determining if providing breakfast to hungry kids is a worthwhile activity.

To be honest, most indicators are messy and plagued by problems. Changes in funding, poor reporting practices and changes in reporting practices are all common occurrences that can affect the movement of an indicator.

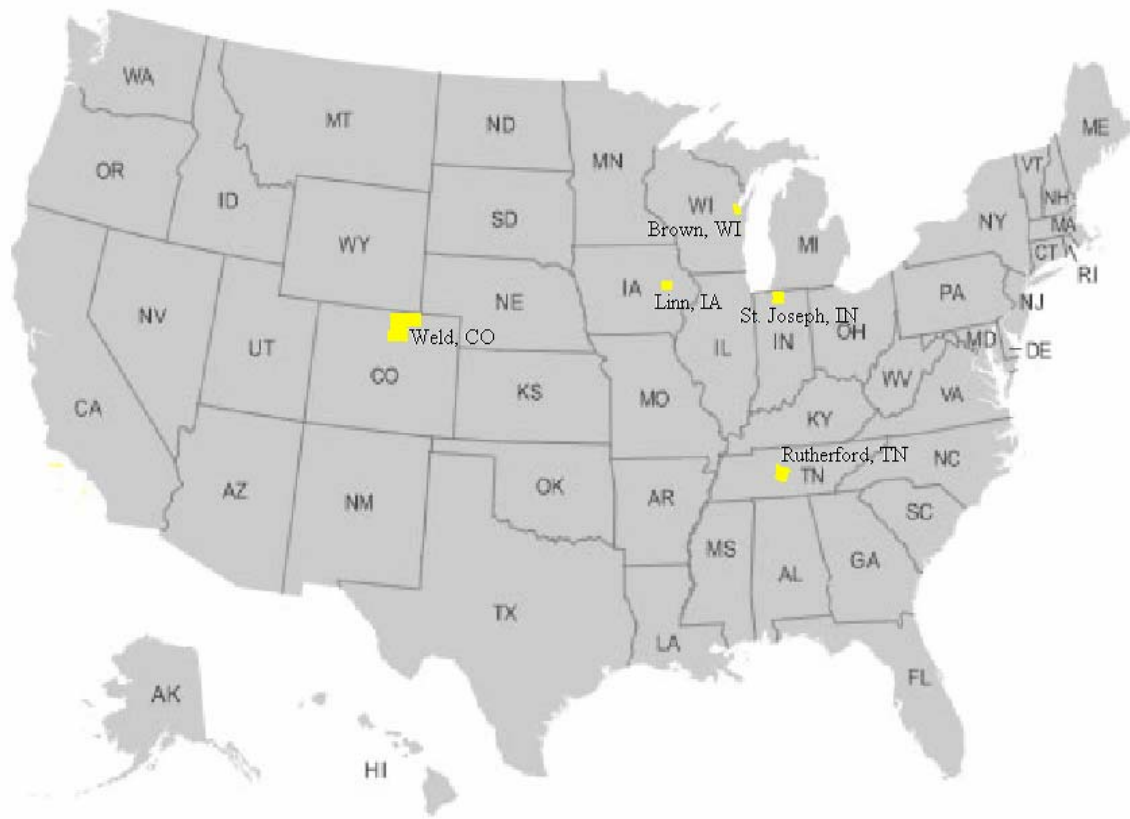
Comparison Areas

We selected the five comparison counties on the basis of three criteria: population, presence of college, and similarity of the area to Kalamazoo. The five comparison areas have a county population within 40,000 people (plus or minus) of Kalamazoo’s population as well as a reasonably sized city. All have at least one medium-sized college or university, with over 15,000 students enrolled at that institution. Similarities of the area are factors such as not suburban or not the state capital.

Table 1 Comparison Areas

County	City	County Population	City Population	College Students
Kalamazoo, Michigan	Kalamazoo	240,720	72,637	39,697
Brown, Wisconsin	Green Bay	240,213	100,781	16,422
Linn, Iowa	Cedar Rapids	201,853	126,396	18,273
Rutherford, Tennessee	Murfreesboro	228,829	98,406	22,322
St. Joseph, Indiana	South Bend	266,678	104,069	20,398
Weld, Colorado	Greeley	236,857	90,306	17,993

Map 1 Location of Comparison Areas



Individuals and Families

Many of the individuals and families who reside in Kalamazoo County face multiple barriers which prevent them from reaching their full potential. The Foundation invests in quality programs that are informed by best practices and support basic needs, including:

- Emergency shelter and transitional housing;
- Safety, food, clothing, transportation, and quality child care;
- Health care access, including medical, mental, dental, and preventative care; and
- Skill building to help individuals and families maintain or move toward self-sufficiency.

Table 2 Summary of Individual and Families Indicators

Indicator	Focus	Direction
Kindergarten through 12 th Graders Eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunches	Safety net – safety, food, clothing, transportation and affordable, quality child and family care	Slight increase in the number of economically-distressed families
Financial Service Information Requests on the 2-1-1 Help Line	Safety net – safety, food, clothing, transportation and affordable, quality child and family care	Slight increase in the number of economically-distressed households and individuals
Jobs Education and Training Program Participants Who Indicate Transportation Is a Barrier to Employment	Safety net – safety, food, clothing, transportation and affordable, quality child and family care	The need for reliable transportation is increasing.
Number of Shelter Nights Provided Annually	Quality emergency shelter and transitional housing opportunities	Shelter nights’ numbers increase but nights per individual are decreasing
Annual Cost for Charity Care and Bad Debt at the County’s Two Major Hospitals	Access to healthcare – medical, mental, dental, and preventative care	Sharp increase in uncompensated care
Infant Mortality Rate for Africa Americans and Whites	Access to healthcare – medical, mental, dental, and preventative care	Improving conditions for African Americans

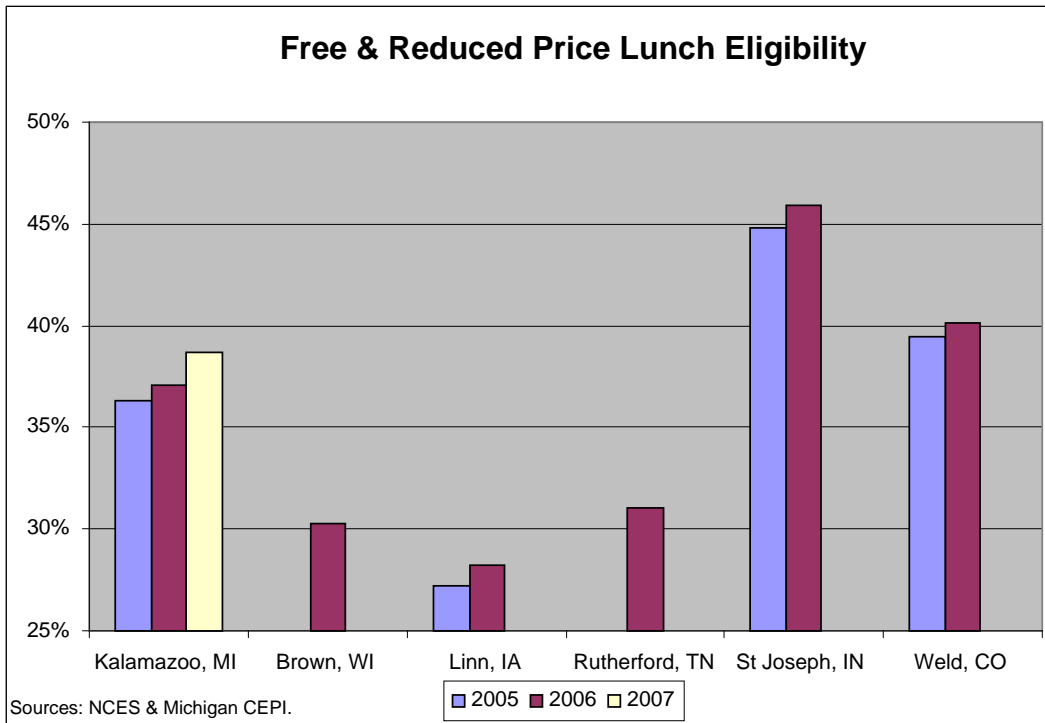
Free and Reduced Price Lunch Eligibility Rates

Definition: Percentage of kindergarten through 12th grade students who are eligible for free and reduced price lunches at schools because they are living in low-income households.

Reason for Inclusion: An increase in the percentage of students living in households which are eligible for free and reduced price lunches would suggest an increase in the number of households in economic distress and, therefore needing safety net resources.

Finding: In 2007, nearly 40 percent of the county's third and fourth graders were eligible for free and reduced price lunches. Unfortunately, the number of students eligible for the program has been increasing during the past three years. Similar increases in eligibility are seen in the limited data for the comparison regions, suggesting that this is an unfortunate trend being recorded across the country. However, the percentage is much lower in several of the comparison areas of Linn County, Iowa; Brown County, Wisconsin; and Rutherford, Tennessee.

Chart 1



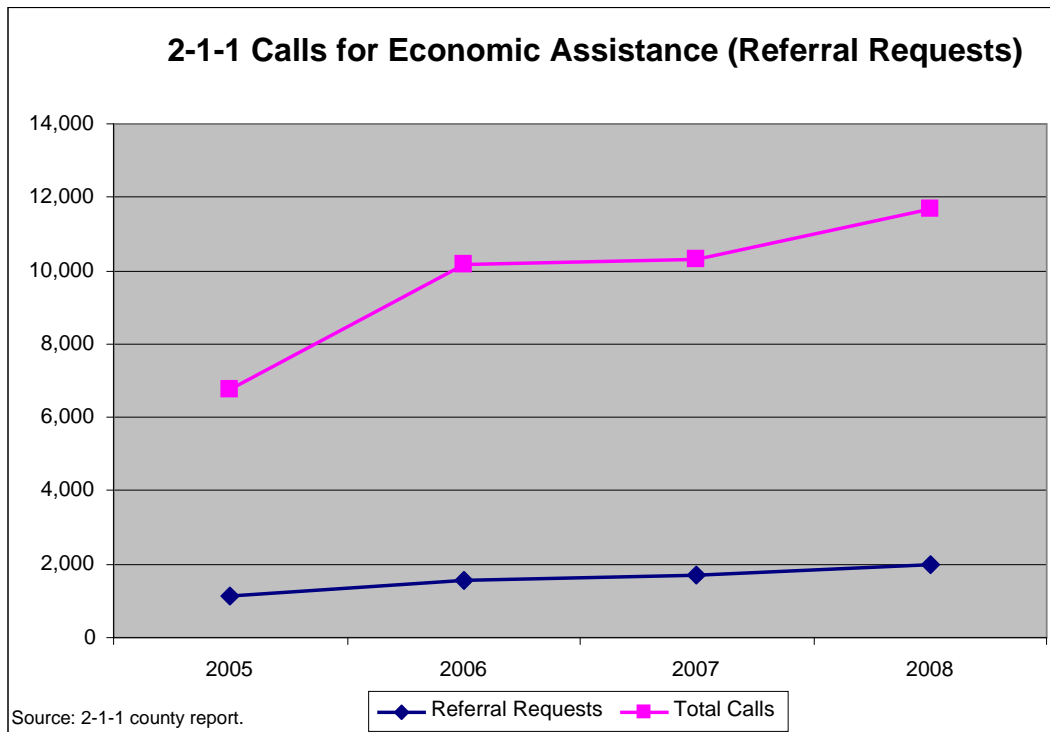
Financial Service Information Requests on the 2-1-1 Help Line

Definition: The number and percentage of calls to 2-1-1 for the following 12 assistance request call categories: payments for gas, electric, rent, water, heating, prescription, mortgage, medical, property tax, dental, telephone, and car payments.

Reason for Inclusion: Change in the number of families and individuals calling the county's 2-1-1 help line because they are having difficulty in paying their utilities, medical, or other household bills is an indication that more families and individuals are struggling with self-sufficiency. It is important to note that we do not believe that all economically distressed families and individuals call 2-1-1. In fact, we do not know what percent of distressed families and individuals call or even know about the county's 2-1-1 service. Call increases could be an indicator of an increase in awareness of the service rather than an increase in need. For this reason, the more relevant indicator is the percentage of all 2-1-1 calls that are for one or more of the 12 economic assistance categories.

Findings: Although the number of 2-1-1 calls has increased dramatically, the percentage of those calls for economic assistance has remained steady. The sharp increase in request calls from 2005 to 2006 likely reflects an increased awareness of the service, which began in April 2003. Since 2006, calls have increased at a modest rate, and the proportion of the calls that are for economic assistance has remained fairly steady. In short, this indicator suggests that economic conditions may be slightly deteriorating as of 2007.

Chart 2



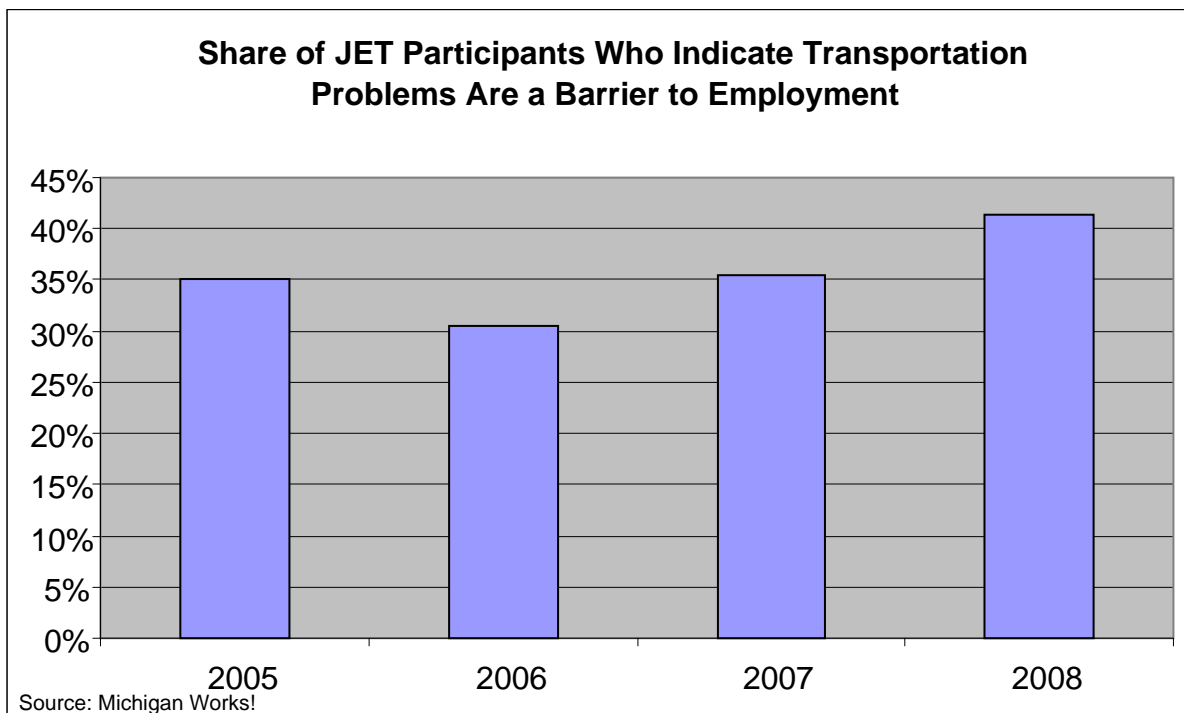
Jobs Education and Training (JET) Program Participants Who Indicate that Transportation Is a Barrier to Employment

Definition: The percentage of persons in the federally funded Job Education and Training (JET), program who indicate during registration or during participation that they lack a car, lack gas money, lack car repair funding, and/or lack money to secure a certificate/license as reason(s) for keeping them from obtaining or retaining employment.

Reason for Inclusion: Households without reliable transportation must rely on public transportation or transportation help from friends or family. This limits their opportunities for employment and achieving economic self-sufficiency.

Findings: The share of JET program participants who report the lack of transportation as a barrier to employment has increased over the past two years. This suggests that lack of reliable transportation is a growing problem for the county's lower-income households and persons.

Chart 3



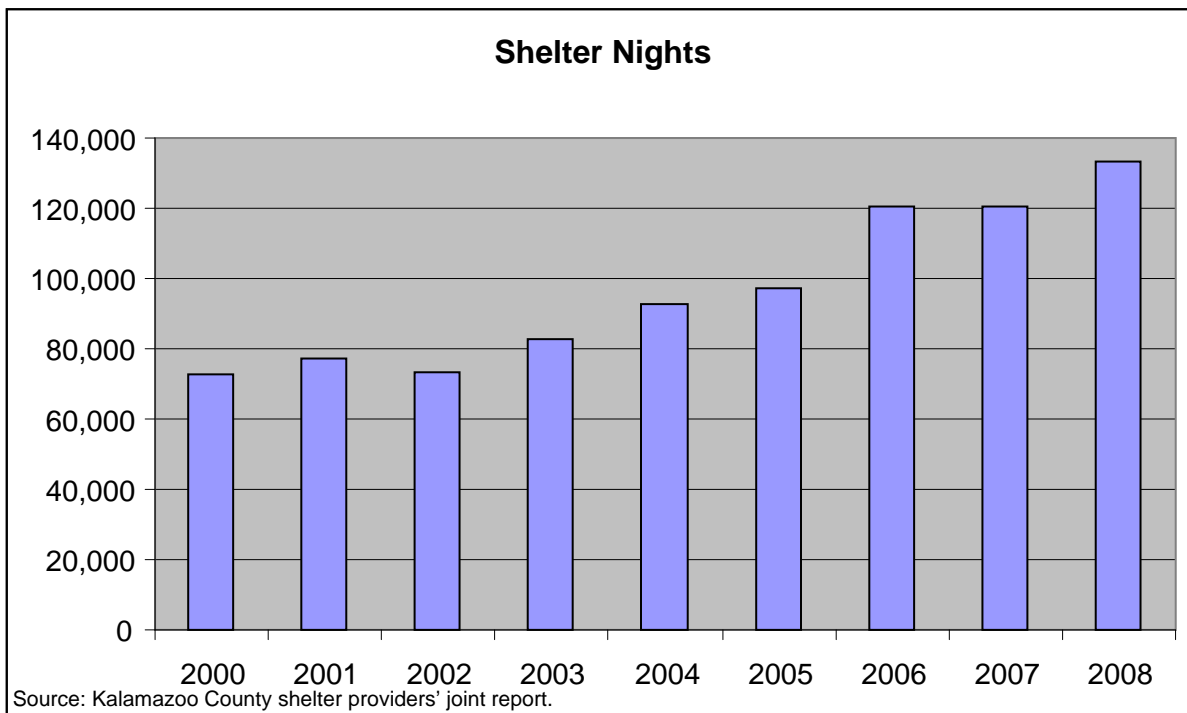
Number of Shelter Nights Provided Annually

Definition: Number of shelter nights per year provided by the county's 11 emergency shelters.

Reason for Inclusion: The availability of overnight shelter for persons who are homeless is a fundamental basic need for survival of the county's most vulnerable population. A decrease in the number of overnight shelter nights suggests that at least some of these individuals have found alternative housing. Unfortunately, this indicator does not address quality or the availability of transitional housing options.

Findings: After holding steady in 2007, the number of shelter nights continued to increase in 2008. This increase continues the dramatic five-year pattern of increase that began in 2002. Currently, 133,000 shelter nights are provided annually. Not shown in Chart 4 is that the number of individuals seeking shelter, in fact, fell from 3,925 in 2006 to 3,357 in 2008, or a 14 percent decline. This indicates that the length of stay is growing for a group of chronically homeless individuals in the county.

Chart 4



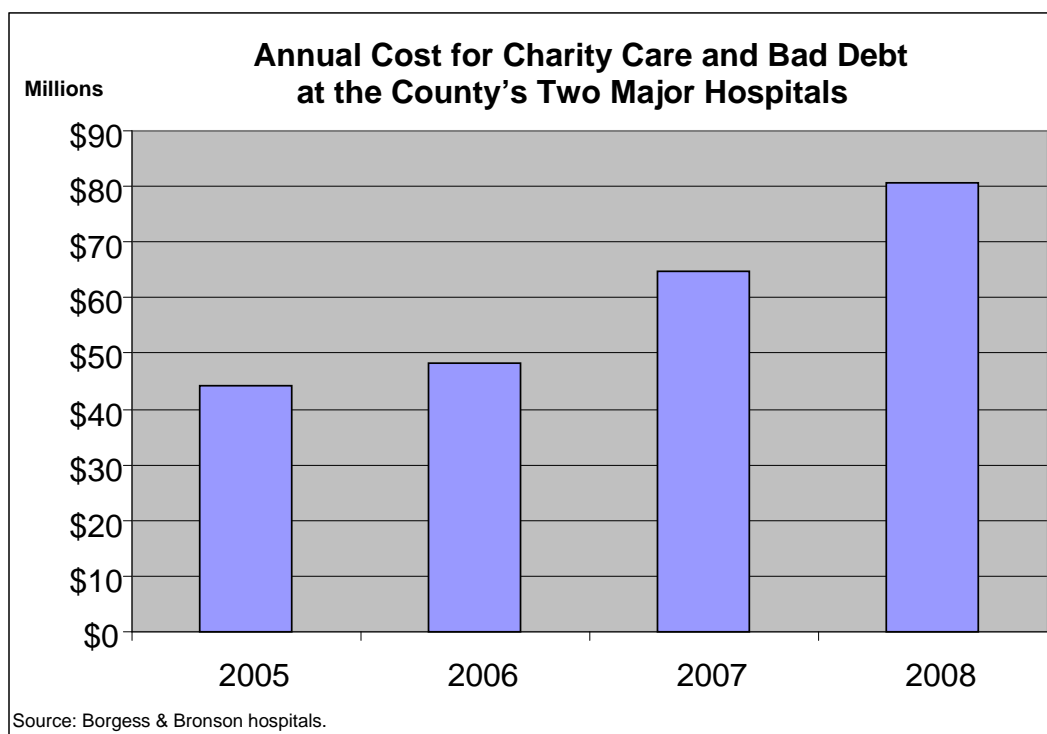
The Cost of Uncompensated Care at the County's Two Major Hospitals

Definition: The total cost of charity care and bad debt at Borgess Health and Bronson Methodist hospitals. It is necessary to include both charity care and bad debt because a high proportion of the bad debt cases are, in fact, generated by persons who would have been eligible for charity care.

Reason for Inclusion: An indicator of the level of medical need by households and individuals who do not have adequate insurance or medical access. Across the country, emergency rooms have become the primary health providers for the uninsured—many of whom are also struggling in poverty. The cost of the service is used instead of the number of persons treated because it better reflects the burden being placed on our two major healthcare systems.

Findings: The cost of uncompensated care at the county's two major health centers rose a sharp 24 percent in 2008 to more than \$80 million. It should be noted, however, that annual increases include both the change in uncompensated care written off by the hospitals, as well as ongoing inflation in the overall cost of health care procedures.

Chart 5



Infant Mortality Rate by Race

Definition: The number of infants who die before their first birthday per 1,000 live births for Whites and African Americans. Data is presented as a three-year moving average to compensate for changes associated with the small size of the data universe (infants in Kalamazoo County).

Reason for Inclusion: Infant mortality is frequently used as a general measure of family health, since it encompasses both access to quality health care, as well as the prevalence of healthy behaviors.

Findings: Locally, infant mortality rates are similar to the rest of the state, but higher than the national average. However, there are large differences between racial groups. African Americans face an infant mortality rate that is more than twice that of Whites in the county, although this figure improved significantly over the last few years. The overall county rate is similar to the state, but higher than the nation as a whole. Not surprisingly the infant mortality rate is highest locally amongst residents of the core city, which is home to a greater number of poor and minority residents.

Chart 6

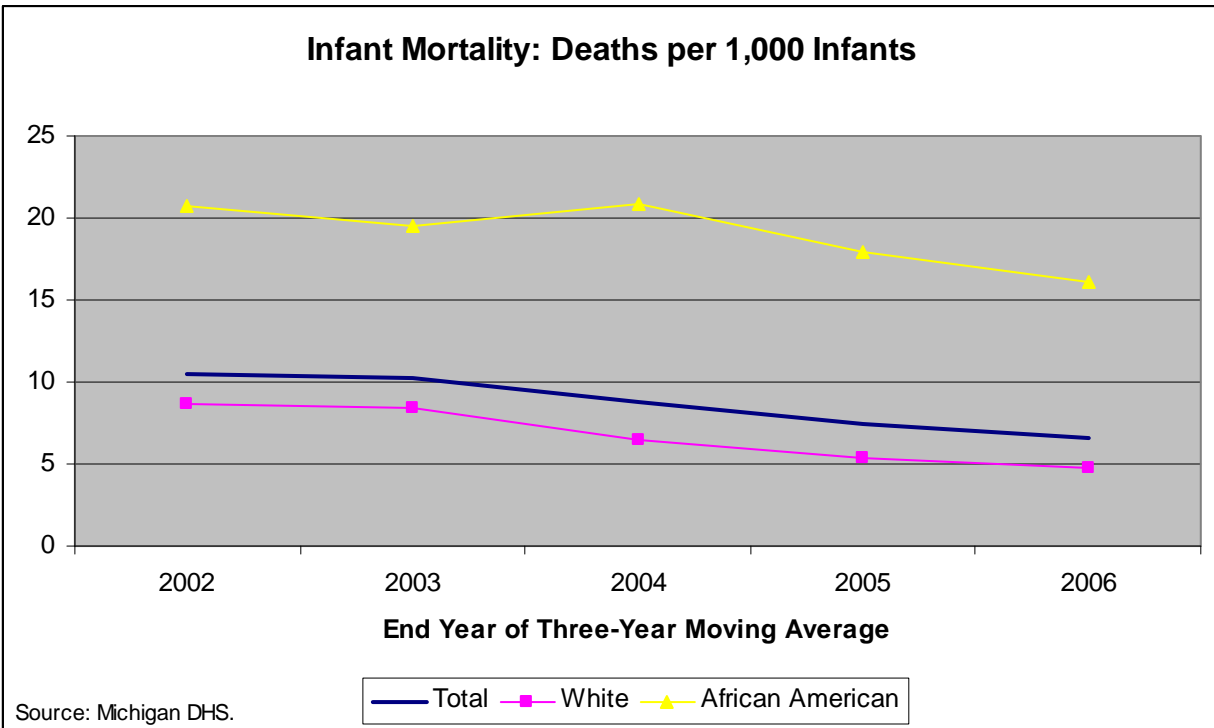
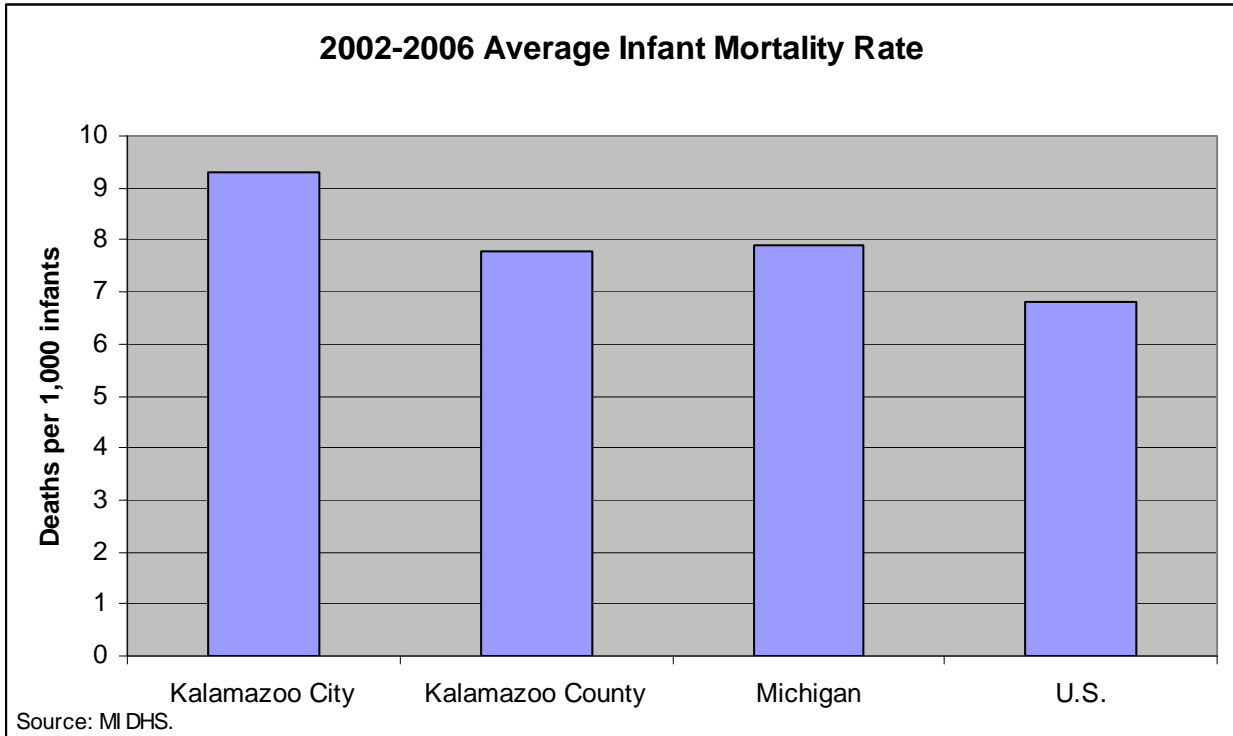


Chart 7



Economic and Community Development

Growing communities with healthy neighborhoods are better able to offer meaningful employment for all of their residents. Moreover, the health of a community’s downtown, which reflects greatly on the community’s level of social activity, depends on vitality of inner-city neighborhoods. The areas of focus under this heading are:

- A vibrant urban core as a platform for economic growth;
- Downtown, neighborhood, and community redevelopment;
- Job readiness and job opportunities; and
- Stable housing that contributes to neighborhood health, especially safe and affordable rental and home ownership opportunities.

Table 3 Economic and Community Development

Indicator	Focus	Direction
Comparison Unemployment Rates	A vibrant urban core as a platform for economic growth	Improving, but still higher than comparison group
Comparison Poverty Rates	A vibrant urban core as a platform for economic growth	Becoming more concentrated in the City of Kalamazoo
Downtown Vacancy Rates	A vibrant urban core as a platform for economic growth	Improving, especially residential
Number of Building Permits for Additions and Modifications	Neighborhood and community development	Slightly up
New Abandoned Residential Houses	Neighborhood and community development	Sharp increase in the number of abandoned houses
High School Graduation Rates	Job readiness and job opportunities	Mixed
Completion of Degree and Certificate Programs at KVCC	Job readiness and job opportunities	Slight improvement
Percent of 25-34 Year Olds with a Bachelor’s Degree or Higher	Job readiness and job opportunities	Fairly successful in retaining and attracting educated young adults
Housing Affordability	Access to stable and affordable rental and home ownership opportunities	A concern for county renters

City and Out-County Comparisons – Unemployment Rates

Definition: Comparison of the unemployment rate facing City of Kalamazoo residents to the unemployment rate for individuals who live in Kalamazoo County but outside the city of Kalamazoo.

Reason for Inclusion: With more and more employers locating their businesses in more suburban locations or along I-94, residents of the city of Kalamazoo may becoming more and more spatially isolated from employment opportunities. This indicator is closely tied to the availability of reliable transportation and, more importantly, social networks. Individuals who live in high unemployment neighborhoods do not have the same informal networks for job exploration as individuals who reside in high employment areas. It should also be noted that the unemployment rates cited here are from the U.S. Census Bureau and should not be compared to the monthly rates provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which are more typically published in the news media.

Findings: The city’s unemployment rate dropped dramatically from 16.6 in 2006 to 11.1 percent in 2007, while the rest of the county suffered an increase in its unemployment rate. Still, it should be noted that non-white persons face persistently high unemployment rates compared to whites. Unfortunately, in 2007 Kalamazoo County residents of all races faced a higher unemployment rate than all of the comparison communities.

Chart 8
Unemployment Rates for the Areas’ Core City
and Surrounding Suburban Areas

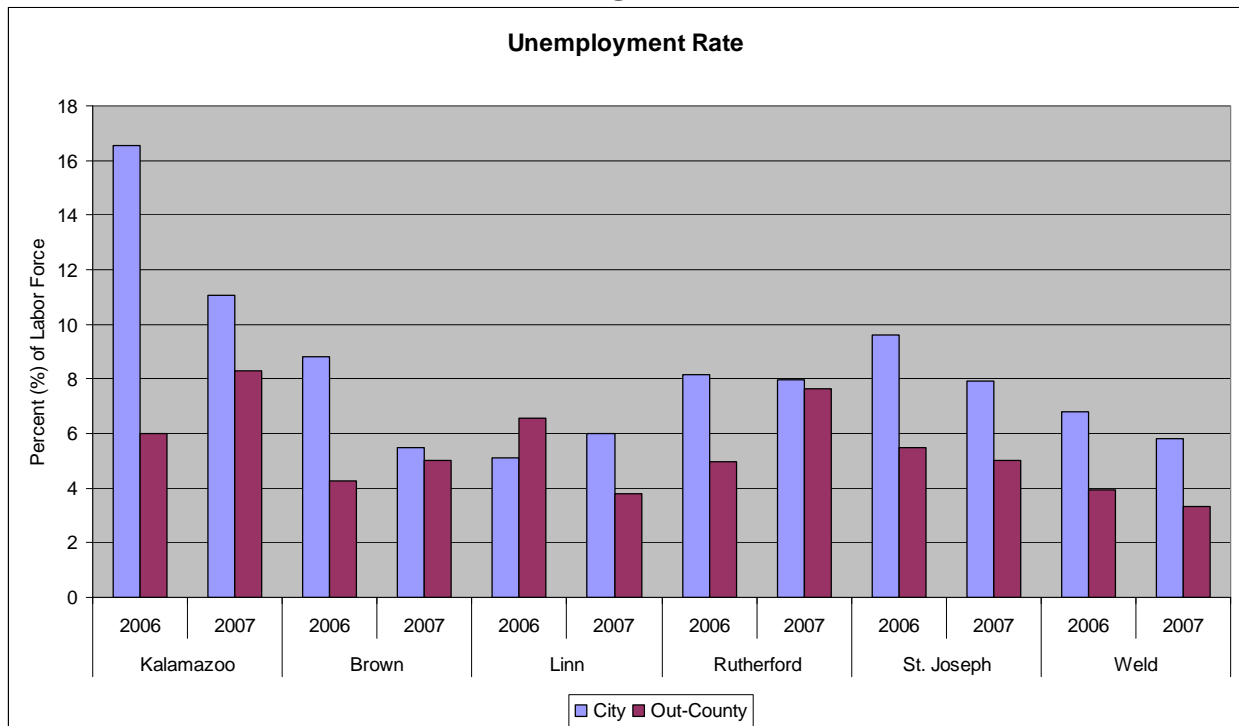
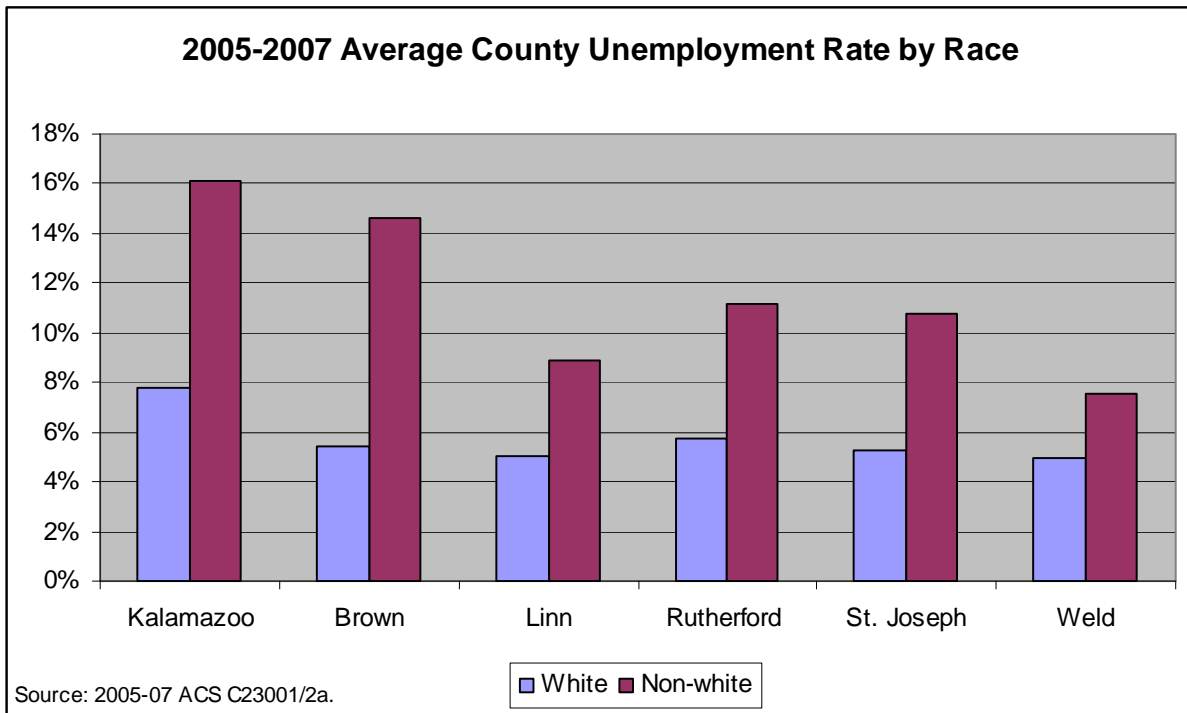


Chart 9
Unemployment Rate Comparison for White and Non-white Residents



City and Out-County Comparisons – Poverty Rates

Definition: Comparison of the poverty rate for City of Kalamazoo residents to the poverty rate for individuals who live in Kalamazoo County but outside the city of Kalamazoo.

Reason for Inclusion: The concentration of poverty in the core city can lead to serious social and fiscal difficulties. Individuals living in high poverty areas can become isolated from beneficial social networks that can generate avenues for better-paying jobs. In addition, they can become more vulnerable to criminal activity. Second, the fiscal condition facing the city can decline as revenues decline and the cost of providing services increases.

Findings: The city’s poverty rate grew slightly in 2007 to 35.5 percent while the rest of the county’s poverty rate declined slightly. Unfortunately, the 2007 poverty rate in the city of Kalamazoo was higher than that for the core city of the comparison areas.

Sadly, children suffer an even higher poverty rate than the population as a whole. On the plus side, the percent of children living in poverty fell slightly last year in both the core city and outlying areas.

Chart 10
People in Poverty in the Core City and Outlying Areas of the Comparison Counties

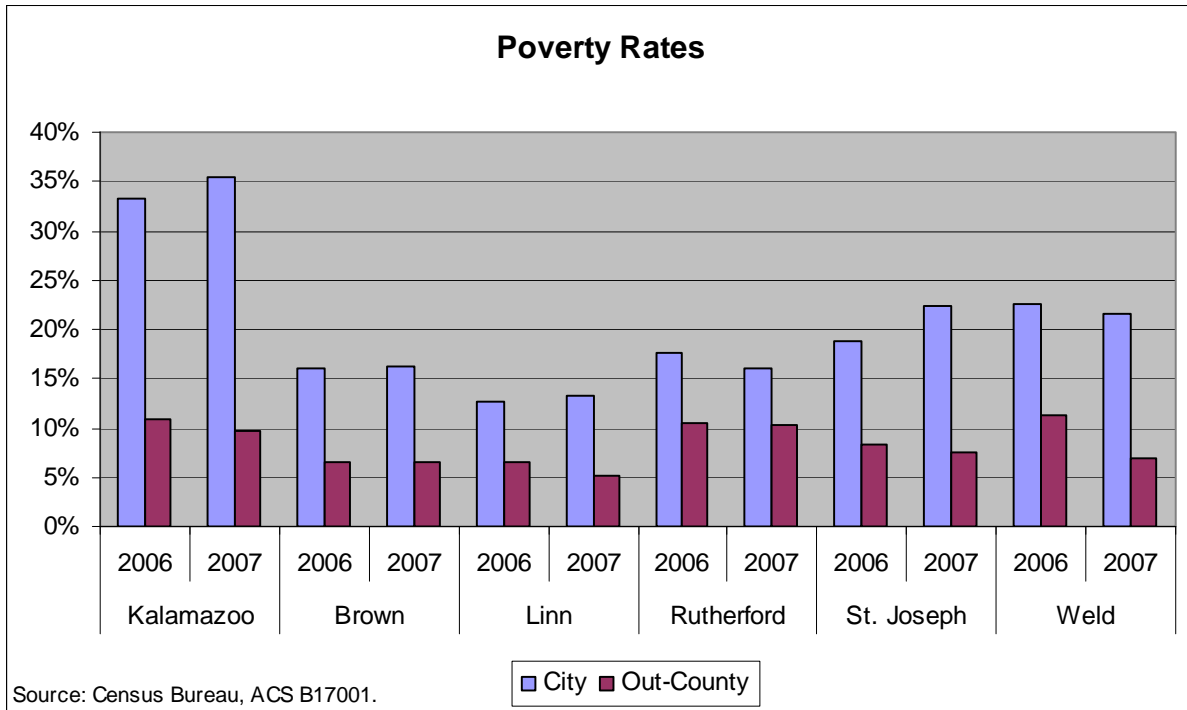
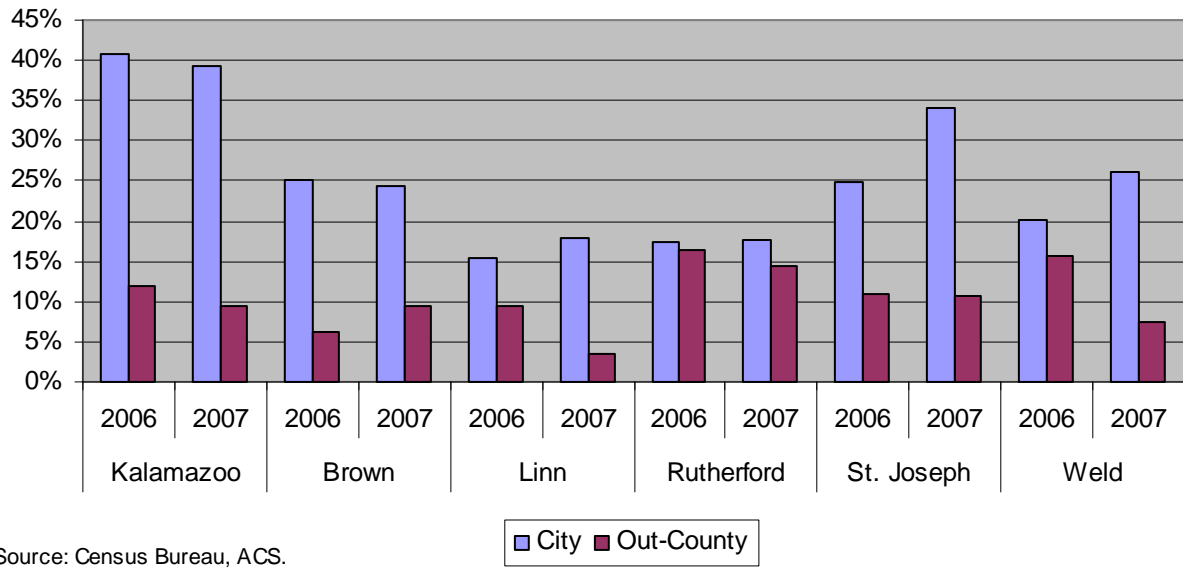


Chart 11

**Percent of Children Age 0-17 in Poverty
Core vs. Rest-of-County**



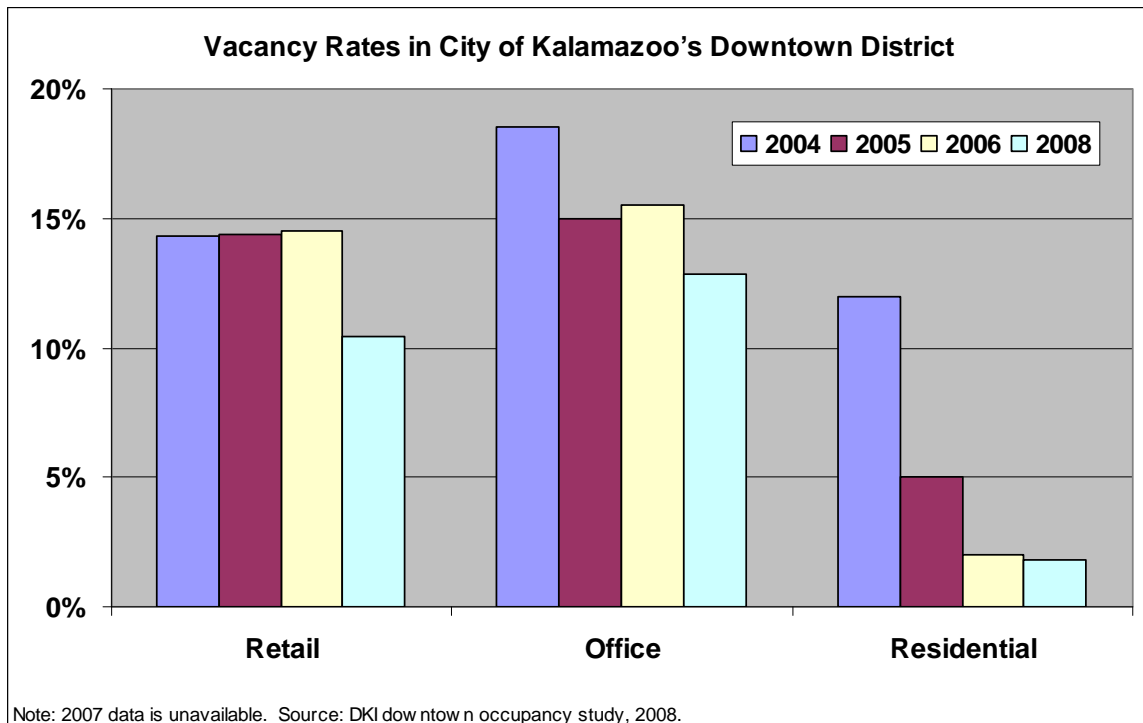
Downtown Kalamazoo Vacancy Rates

Definition: Annual vacancy rates of retail, office, and residential units in the City of Kalamazoo Downtown District.

Reason for Inclusion: The health of a metropolitan area's core downtown reflects the social vitality of its community. A weak downtown reflects quite poorly on the community and can generate a negative perception, which once in place, is difficult to remove. While commercial vacancy rates are important, it is the vacancy rate of residential units which may provide the strongest indicator of the downtown's attractiveness.

Findings: Vacancy rates in the city's downtown district declined from 2006 to 2008. Currently, the vacancy rate for residential units is down to a very low 1.8 percent. However, the district's vacancy rates for commercial and office space is still above 10 percent.

Chart 12



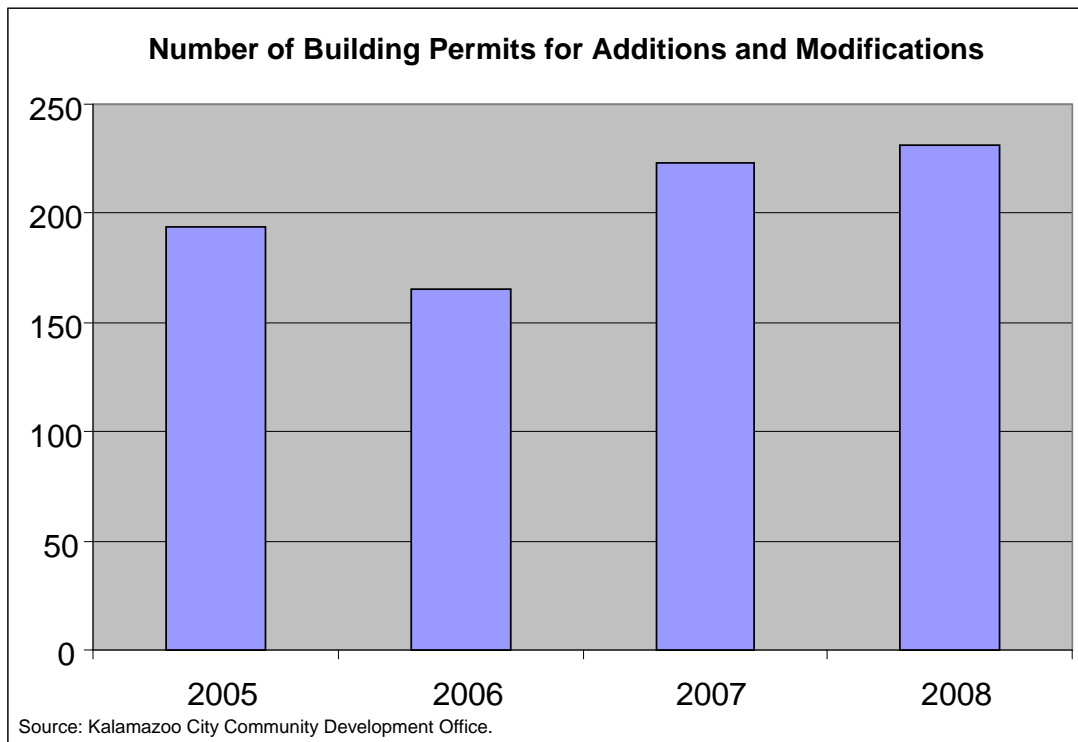
Building Permits for Rehabilitation and Additions in the City of Kalamazoo

Definition: The annual number of rehabs, additions, and modifications of single-family owner occupied units in the City of Kalamazoo. These permits exclude those for standard maintenance repair, such as a new roof. While value estimates for the issued permits are available, they are highly volatile.

Reason for Inclusion: This indicator shows the willingness of existing and new residents to invest in their neighborhoods. It suggests that residents are willing to turn their first home into their second home instead of moving.

Findings: Permit activity has been increasing slightly during the past two years in the city, after falling in 2006.

Chart 13



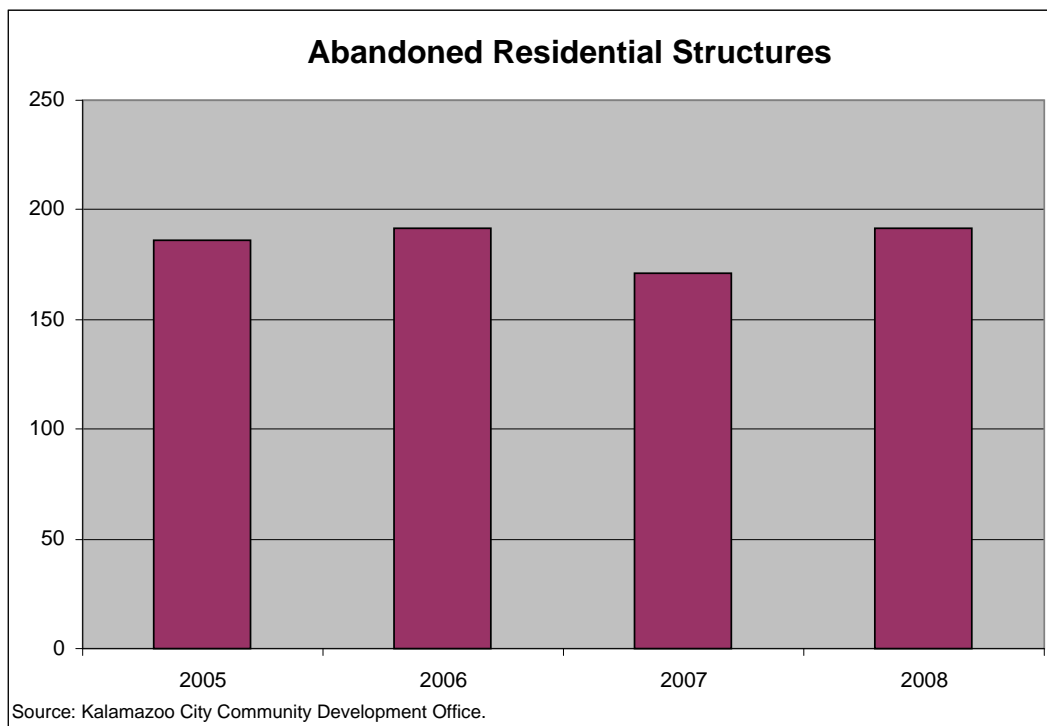
Abandoned Residential Structure Cases

Definition: The annual number of houses in the City of Kalamazoo actively classified by city inspectors as abandoned. A vacant house is classified as abandoned when it becomes ill-maintained with broken windows, peeling paint, or other signs of neglect. It is taken off the list only if it is rehabbed or demolished.

Reason for Inclusion: An abandoned and neglected house can have a significant impact on neighboring housing values and, more importantly, on the general perception of the neighborhood. It can also attract criminal activity into the area.

Findings: The number of abandoned residential structures increased in 2008, after falling the previous year. Although 77 homes were rehabbed or demolished in 2007—a record high for the past four years—it was not enough to offset the number of new homes being abandoned. It is possible that the increase in foreclosures during the past year has forced some individuals and families to abandon their homes.

Chart 14



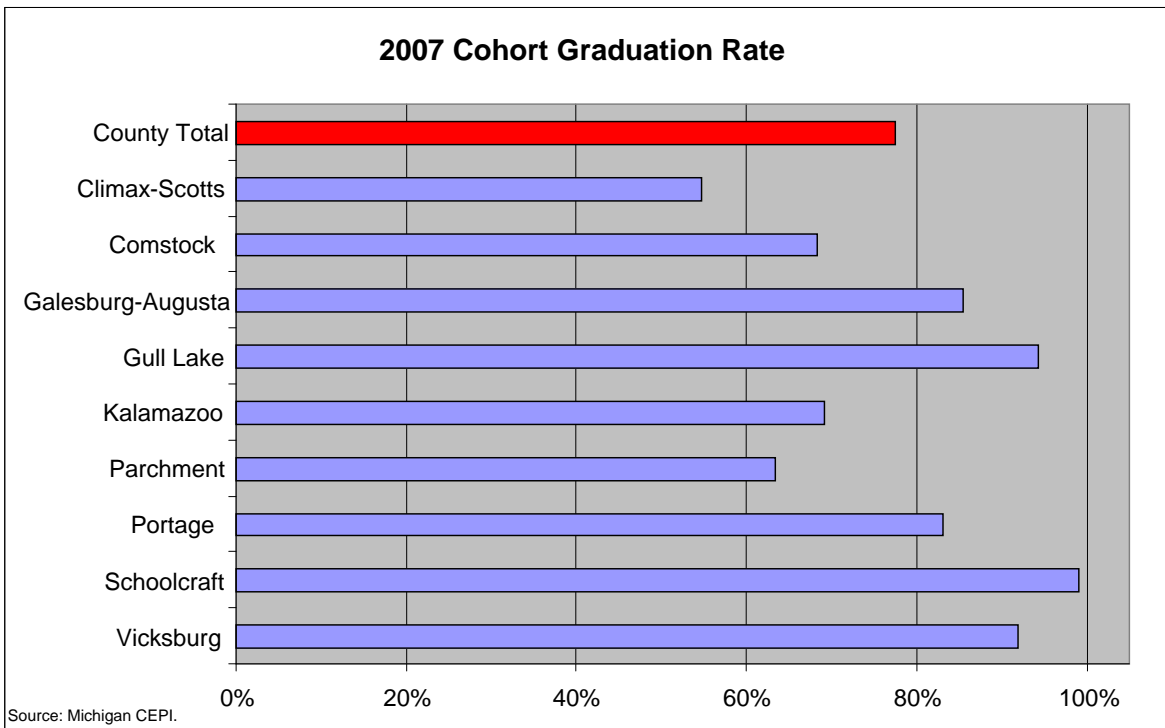
2007 Cohort Graduation Rate

Definition: The total number of students assigned to a cohort at the start of ninth grade who are on track for completing high school (includes transfers, other completers minus dropouts) divided by the cohort's total. This is a new methodology for calculating the district's graduation rate, therefore a historical analysis is not available.

Reason for Inclusion: Individuals earning a high school diploma have a much higher potential of not only obtaining and retaining a job but they are also more likely to hold jobs with increased potential of securing self-sufficiency and opportunities for further learning and advancement. Studies also indicate that a reduction of high school dropouts also increases long-term economic output.

Findings: Countywide, the high school graduation rate is less than 80 percent. The rural school district of Climax-Scotts suffers the lowest graduation rates while the equally rural Schoolcraft School district celebrates the highest. Less than 70 percent of Kalamazoo Public Schools' ninth graders graduate on time.

Chart 15



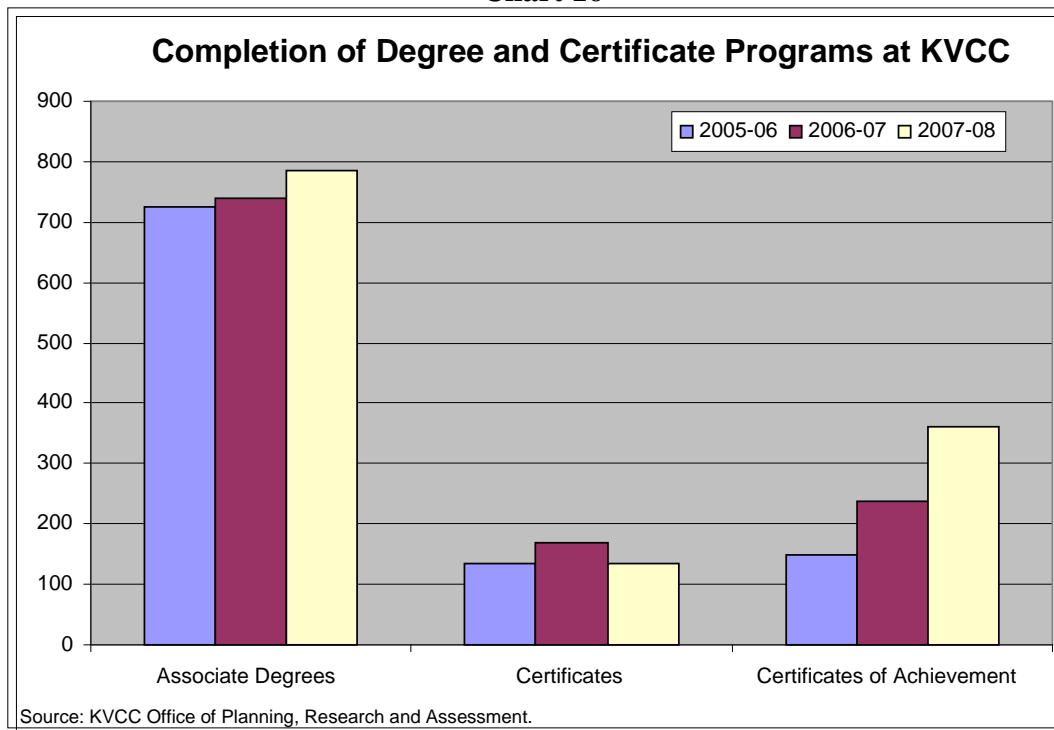
Kalamazoo Valley Community College Program Completion Rate

Definition: The number of students completing Associate's degrees, one-year certificate programs, or shorter-term certificate of achievement programs at KVCC.

Reason for Inclusion: Individuals with skill certifications are more likely to be job ready, thus increasing their job opportunities and income potential.

Findings: The completion rates for Associate's degrees, one-year certificates, and certificates of achievement have modestly increased during the last three years.

Chart 16



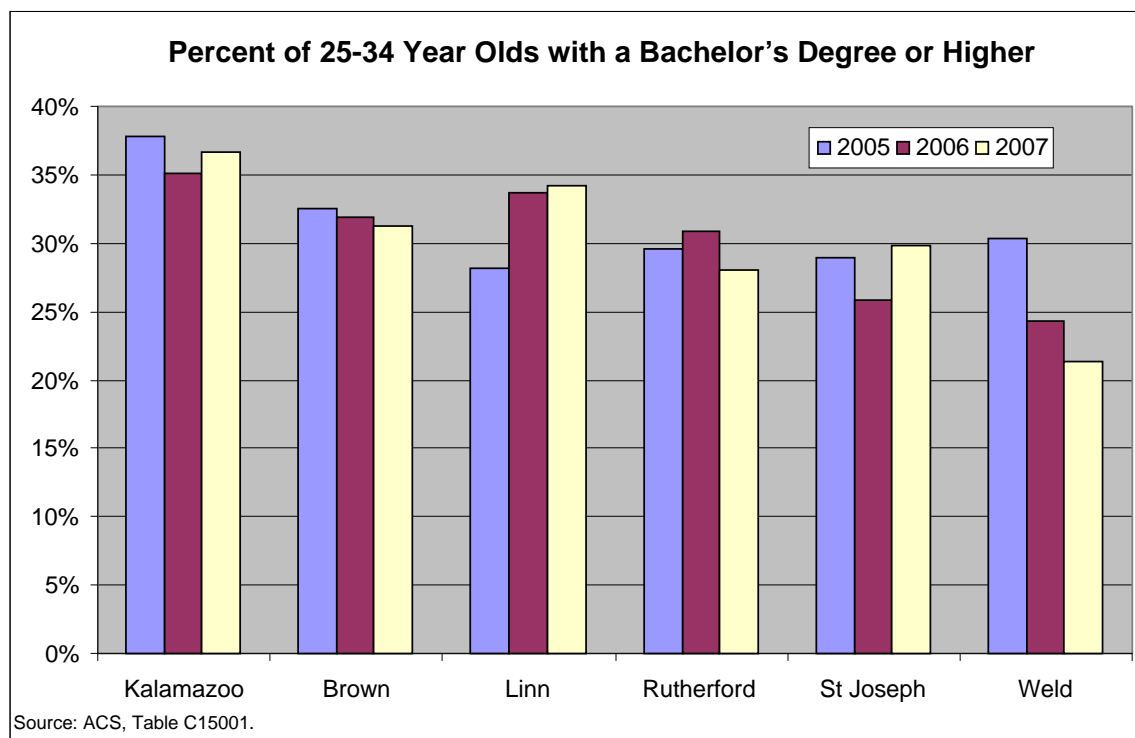
25-34 Year Olds with Bachelor's Degree or Higher in Kalamazoo County

Definition: The percentage of 25-34 year olds living in the county who have completed at least a Bachelor's degree.

Reason for Inclusion: This indicator addresses both the quality of the county's workforce and the county's quality of life. Young college-educated adults face many residential options from large cities such as Chicago or New York to small urban areas such as Kalamazoo. Large cities have a big advantage in this contest because they offer greater employment opportunities for the individual and his or her significant partner as well as more art, cultural, and recreational opportunities.

Findings: Kalamazoo County has been successful in retaining young college graduates as well as attracting college-educated young adults relative to similar counties. More than one-third of the county 25-34 year olds hold at least a four-year college degree.

Chart 17



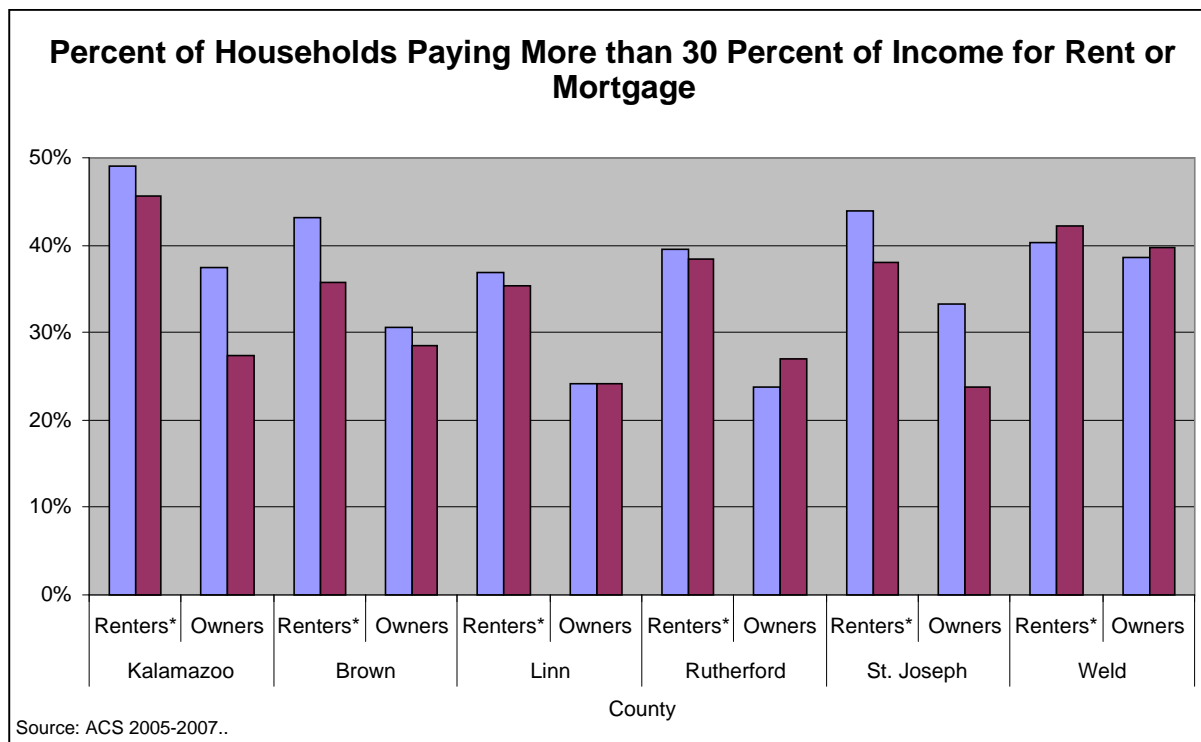
City/Out-County Comparisons of Mortgage and Rent as a Percent of Income

Definition: The percentage of county residents who pay more than 30 percent of their income in housing costs—either mortgage payments or rent—in 2007. Only renters who are 25 years of age or older are included in this analysis.

Reason for Inclusion: Housing affordability remains a major component of a city’s quality of life and affects its attractiveness to potential new residents. However, housing affordability can also be a sign of a weak economy and an unattractive location because it reflects a lack of demand.

Findings: Housing affordability is a concern for the county’s renters, as well as Kalamazoo City residents. The county is less affordable than all five of the comparison areas. Although all of the comparison areas have a college presence, it is possible that Western Michigan University simply has a greater influence on county rent. For homeowners, Kalamazoo County is right in line with the other comparison counties.

Chart 18



Youth Development

Communities that provide nurturing environments for their young people face a promising future as their youth become adults and are better equipped to become productive contributors to the community and are prepared for lifelong learning. The focus areas under this heading are:

- Access to caring adults through youth/adult partnerships in safe places;
- Age appropriate strategies for growth and development; and
- Opportunities to build social and emotional learning competencies and a positive self identity.

Table 4 Youth Development

Indicator	Focus	Direction
Parent Teacher Conference Attendance Rates	Access to caring adults through youth/adult partnerships in safe spaces	Attendance in the Kalamazoo Public Schools has improved
16-19 Year Old Dropouts Who Are Not in School or Employed	Access to caring adults through youth/adult partnerships in safe spaces	Similar to comparison areas
Number of Children in Investigated Families	Access to caring adults through youth/adult partnerships in safe spaces	Negative—the number has increased during the last two years
Birth Rate to Teens	Age appropriate strategies for growth and development	Stable
Juvenile Delinquency Petition Filings	Age appropriate strategies for growth and development	Improved in 2007
Concentration of Non-White Youth in Predominantly Poor Schools	Poverty is a major factor in student performance and long-term achievement.	Concentration is high and the levels is relatively stable
Youth Referred for Behavioral Interventionist Services	Opportunities to build social and emotional learning competencies and positive self identity	Referrals appear to be high; however a trend cannot currently be identified due to a new intervention system in Kalamazoo Public Schools

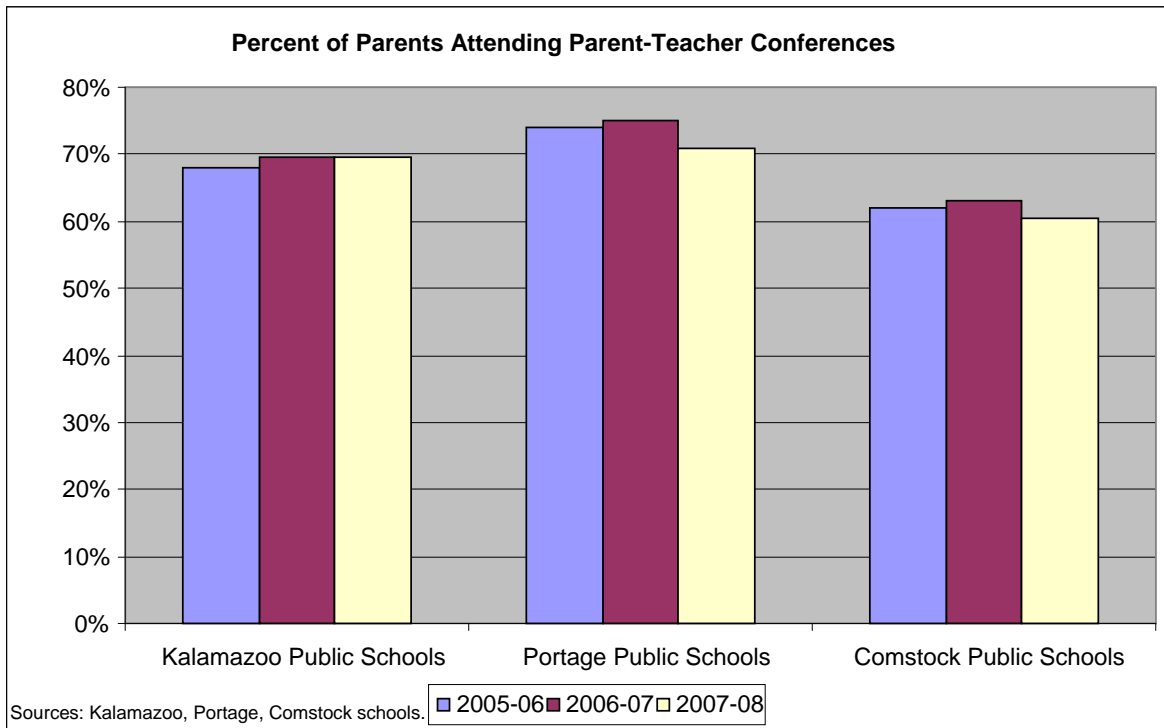
Parent Teacher Conference Attendance Rates

Definition: The percentage of parents attending their child's scheduled conference by school district.

Reason for Inclusion: Parent-teacher conference attendance is an indicator of a caring adult acknowledging the school/parent partnership and value in their child's education.

Findings: In the Portage and Comstock school districts, parent attendance at teachers' conferences fell slightly in the 2007-08 school year but held steady in the Kalamazoo Public Schools. It is also interesting to note that parent attendance at the Kalamazoo and Portage Public schools are now nearly equal.

Chart 19



Persons 16-19 Year Olds without High School Diploma and Not in School or Employed

Definition: Percent of 16-19 year olds who had not completed high school, and who were not employed or in school.

Reason for Inclusion: Teenagers who are just "hanging out" face a very uncertain and difficult future.

Findings: During the 2005-07 period, 2.5 percent, (429 individuals) of the county's 16-19 year olds did not complete high school and were not in school or employed. The county statistics are similar to those of the comparison counties. A more detailed analysis of the data uncovered that a higher proportion of 16-19 year old males than females have dropped out of school and the labor force.

Chart 20



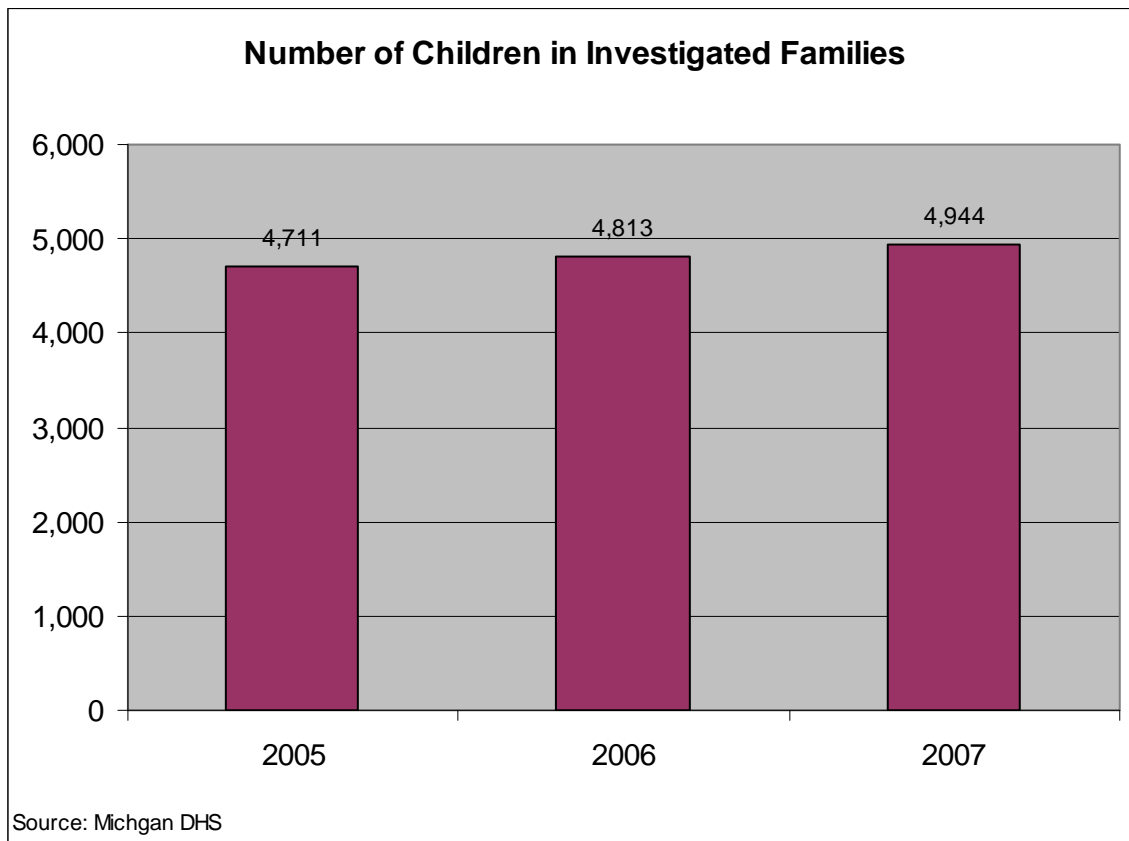
Number of Children in Investigated Families

Definition: Number of children ages 0-17 residing in families where an incident of abuse and neglect was investigated in the prior year. Families may be investigated more than once during the year, and their children would be counted each time.

Reason for Inclusion: A strong indicator of the domestic environment for at-risk children.

Findings: Unfortunately, the number of children in investigated families has been on the rise, increasing by 2.7 percent in 2007.

Chart 21



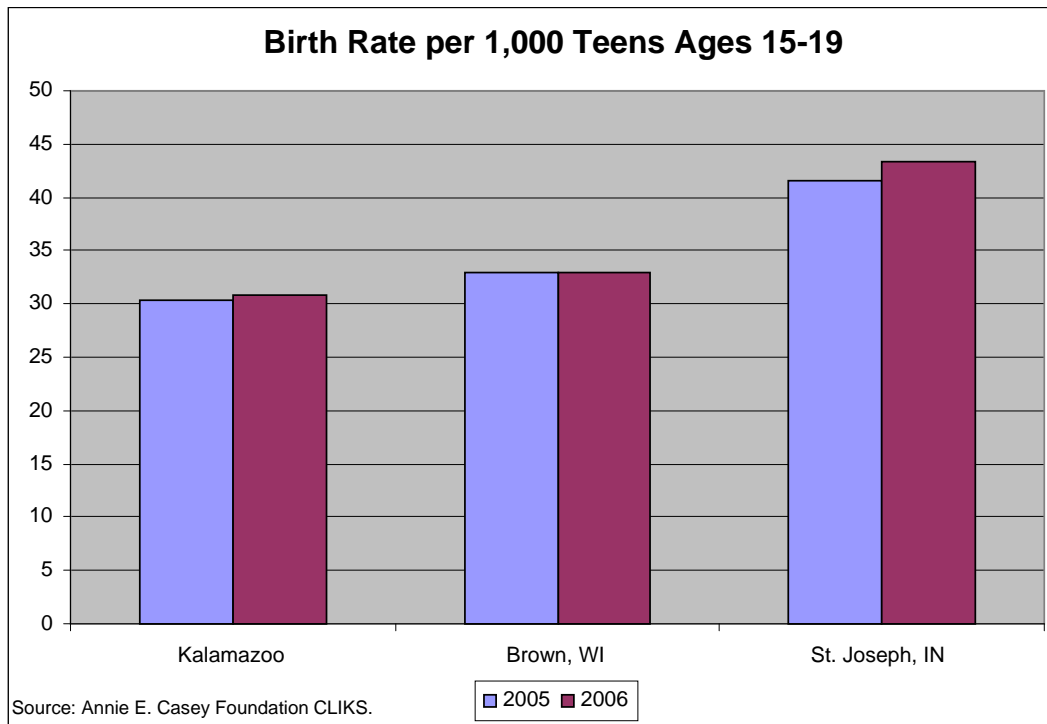
Rate of Live Births to Teens

Definition: The number of births per 1,000 females age 15 to 19.

Reason for Inclusion: Teen mothers are less likely to complete school, are more likely to be single parents, and most likely to live in poverty.

Findings: The county rate of live births to teens is stable and is below the rate for the two comparison areas where comparable data are available.

Chart 22



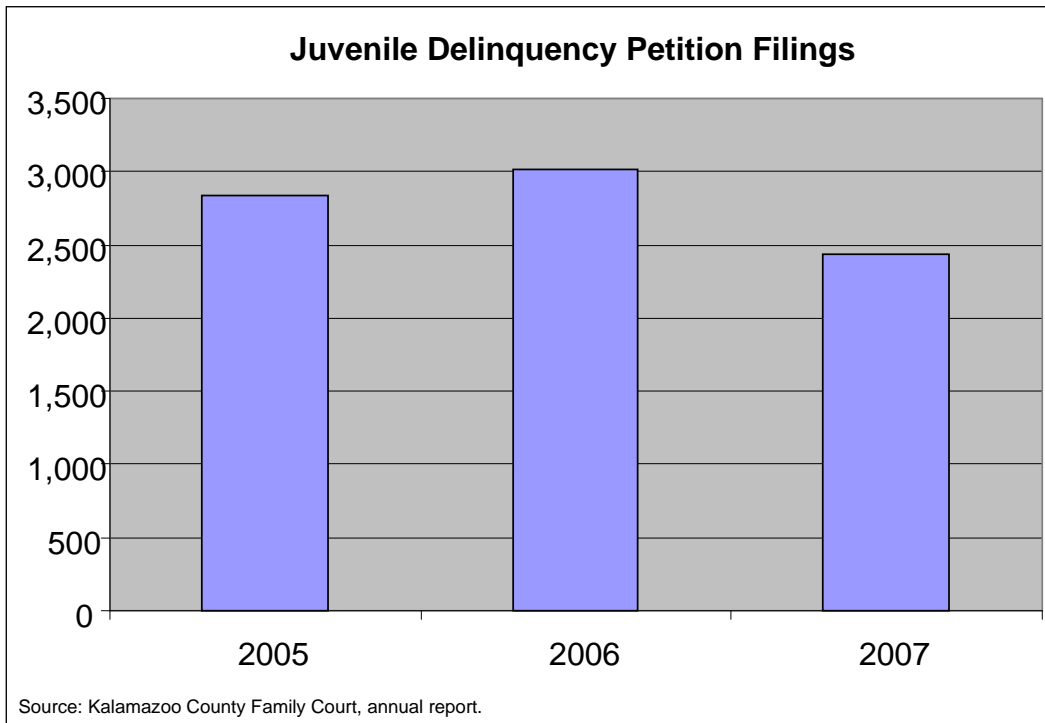
Juvenile Delinquency Petition Filings

Definition: The number of delinquency petitions filed by the prosecuting attorney's office. Offenders are the number of individuals on whom petitions were filed in any given year. Offenses are the number of individual acts of delinquency allegedly committed by the offenders. One petition may include several offenses; therefore, the number of offenses is greater than the number of offenders.

Reasons for Inclusion: Delinquency filings are typically the first “run-in” with the courts for teenagers and represent a failure in the family’s and/or community’s efforts to create a healthy and nurturing environment for its youth.

Finding: Filings fell in 2007 by nearly 20 percent.

Chart 23



Race and Concentration in High-poverty Schools

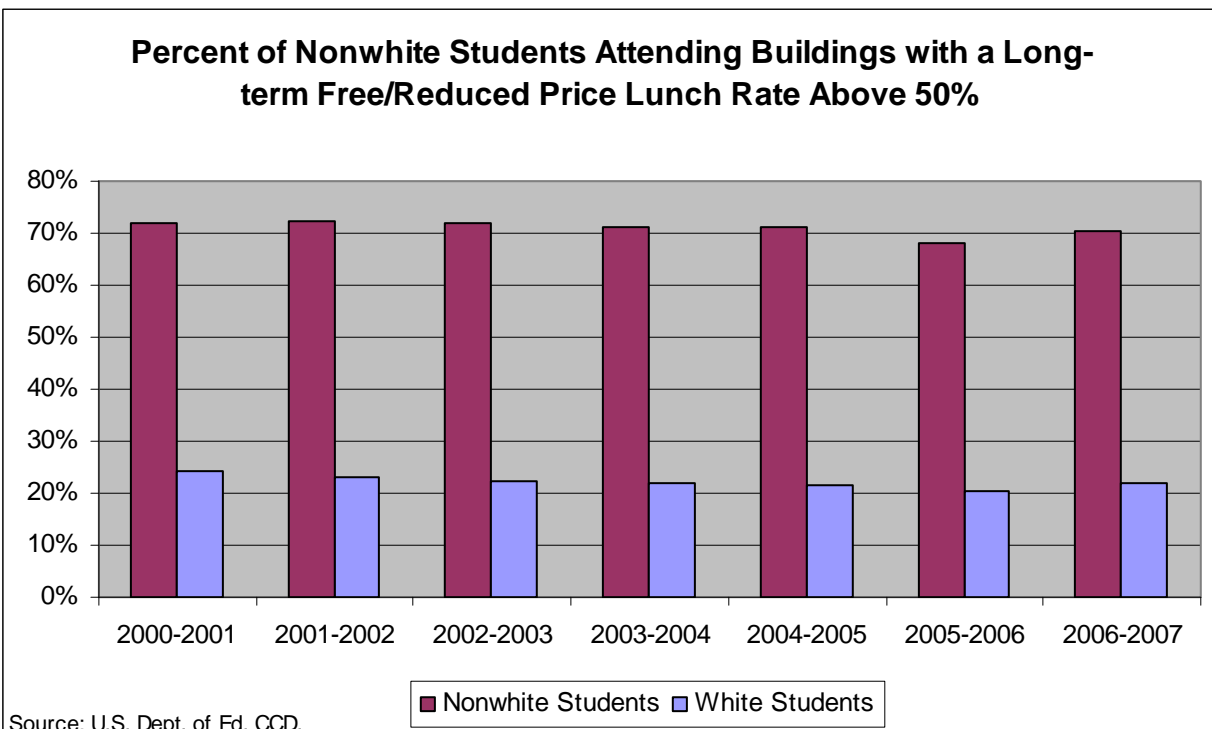
Definition: Percentage of non-white elementary students enrolled in school buildings with rates of free and reduced price lunch eligibility that exceeded an average level of 50 percent across a seven-year period.

Reason for Inclusion: A measure of poverty and isolation associated with race for children in Kalamazoo County.

Finding: The vast majority of minority-race children attend school buildings where more than 50 percent of the student body is eligible for free or reduced price lunches. This illustrates the degree to which impoverished and minority students are concentrated into pockets of poverty. In comparison, fewer than 25 percent of white children are enrolled in high-poverty rate buildings.

Between the 2000-2001 and the 2006-2007 school years, the percentage of children of any race in elementary school buildings with free and reduced price lunch rates above 50 percent fell slightly. This reflects a general movement of families away from inner city school districts and high-poverty neighborhoods and an increase in enrollments in the outlying areas of the county. Although the Kalamazoo Promise has done much to stabilize and even increase enrollment levels in the KPS district, the overall demographics of most of the district's elementary schools remain largely unchanged.

Chart 24



Youth Referred for Behavioral Interventionist Services

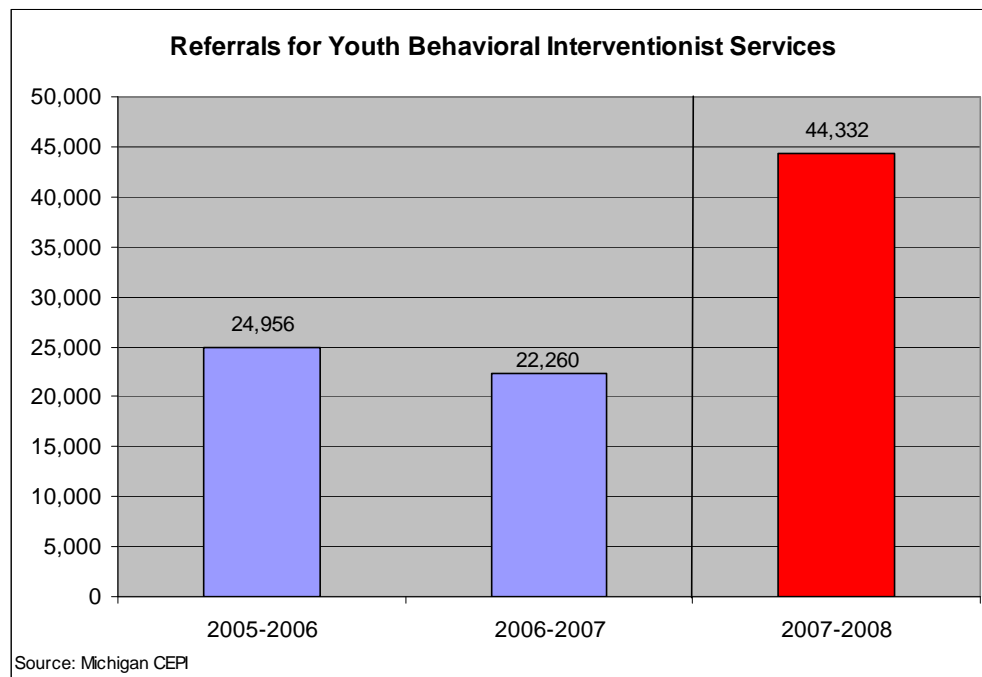
Definition: These data consist of the county's school district reports on the number of incidents/occurrences over each school year on school property or at a school-sponsored activity involving:

- Student bullying,
- Truancy, defined as 10 or more absences without an authorized excuse.
- Disciplinary referrals are defined as staff referrals made to the school's administrative office that result in a sanction such as in-school suspensions, detentions, suspensions, expulsions, and/or community service.
- Physical assaults which occur between a student and another person(s) and are reported to law enforcement or that resulted in suspension or expulsion.

Reason for Inclusion: Safety and disciplinary incidents indicate youth who have not been successful in exhibiting social and emotional learning competencies and, therefore, suggest that caring adults have either not been present in their lives or have been unsuccessful in helping the youth develop a positive self-identity.

Findings: These data are susceptible to agency effect with the differing application of policies across school staff and school systems. The 2007/2008 school year data shows a dramatic increase due to the Positive Behavioral Support Program introduced in the Kalamazoo Public Schools. Because of this new intervention, school staff reported that they expected their levels to increase during the interim, with the hope that the emotional and behavioral learning that the program supports would eventually lead to decreased levels. Nonetheless, the data does suggest schools and their students throughout the county struggle with negative disciplinary activity that impacts growth, learning, and positive self identity. As a point of perspective on the caseload, there are approximately 33,000 K-12 students attending school in the county.

Chart 25



Early Childhood Learning and School Readiness

All of the community’s children should have an equal chance for learning, growth, and development. The focus areas under this heading are:

- Literacy-rich home environments that support education and learning;
- Resources to help parents prepare their children;
- Pre-literacy skills for young children ages 0 to 3, and continued reinforcement of language skills for children ages 3 through 10;
- Breaking down social, physical, emotional, and other barriers to teaching and learning; and
- Coordination, collaboration, and continuity among local agencies addressing early learning and school readiness.

Table 5 Early Childhood Learning and School Readiness

Indicator	Focus	Direction
Number of Children Enrolled in Preschool	Literacy-rich home environments that support education and learning	Slightly down
Percent of 3 rd graders not meeting MEAP math standards	Literacy-rich home environments that support education and learning	Test scores at Kalamazoo and Comstock Public Schools lag the rest of the county
Percent of 3 rd Graders Not Meeting MEAP English Language Arts Standards	Literacy-rich home environments that support education and learning	Test scores at Kalamazoo and Comstock Public School lag the rest of the county
Number of Children Participating in Preschool Education Experiences	Resources to help parents prepare their children	Increasing
Children Placed in Out-of-Home Care (Abuse, Neglect, and Delinquency)	Breaking down social, physical, emotional, and other barriers to teaching and learning	Declining
Free and Reduced Price Breakfast Rates	Breaking down social, physical, emotional, and other barriers to teaching and learning	Increasing

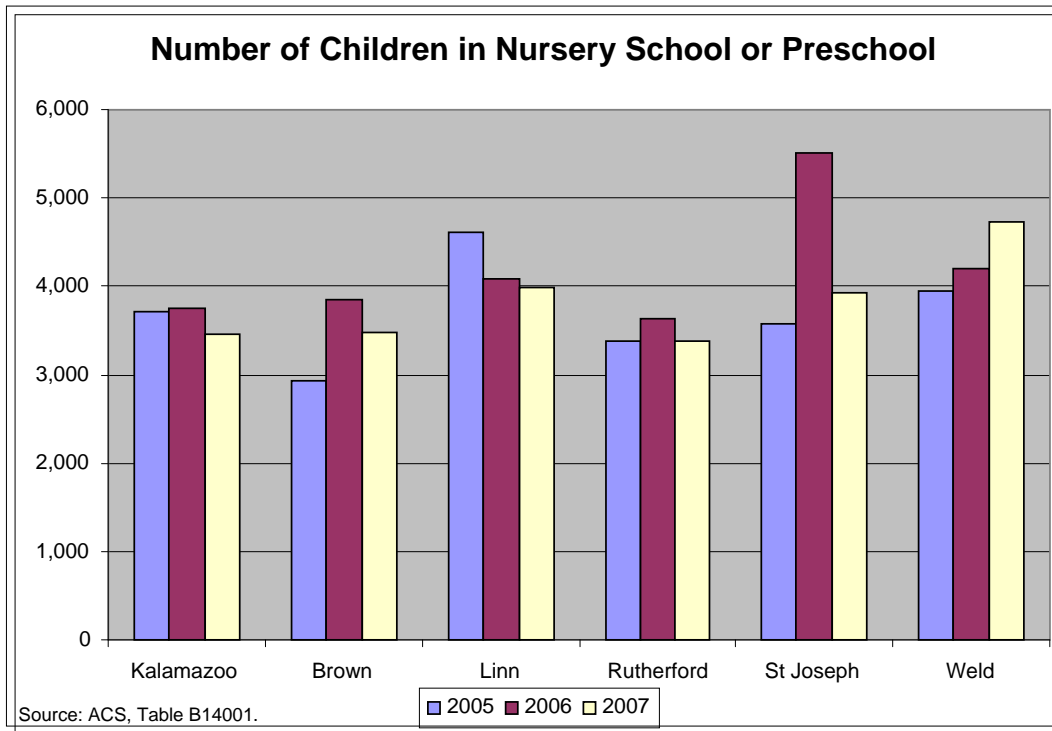
Number of Children Enrolled in Preschool

Definition: Children aged 3 and older who are enrolled in nursery school or preschool.

Reason for Inclusion: Children attending nursery school or preschool are more likely to be from literacy-rich home environments that support education and early learning.

Findings: The number of children attending nursery school or preschool fell by 8 percent in Kalamazoo County. Four of the five comparison counties also witnessed a decline in the number of their children attending nursery school or preschool.

Chart 26



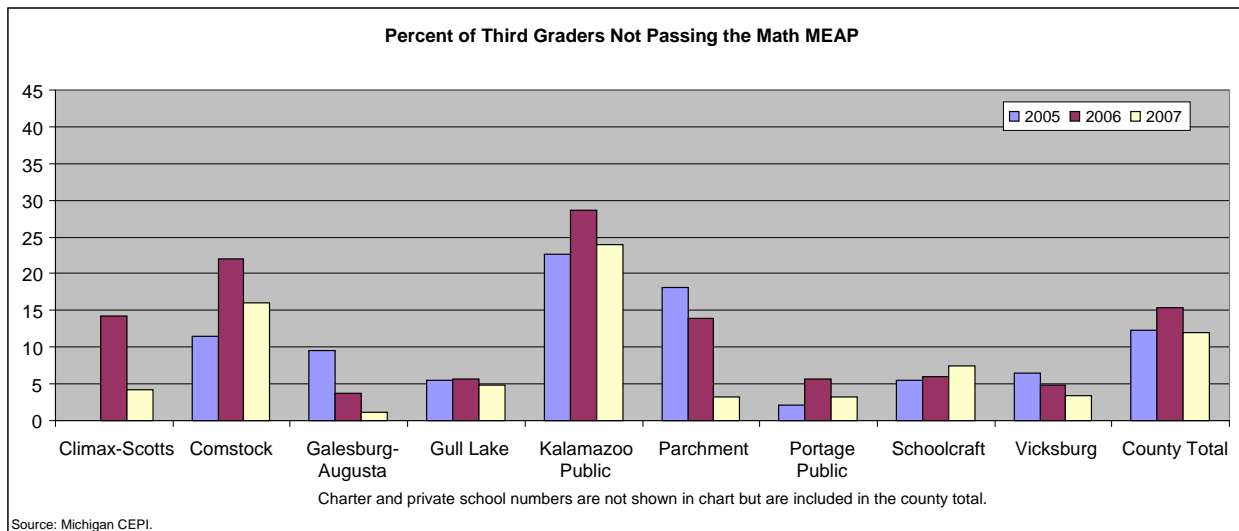
Percent of 3rd Graders Not Meeting MEAP Math Standards

Definition: The number of 3rd graders in the county whose performance on the MEAP math test did not meet the standard; they scored at level 4 (Apprentice) or level 3 (Basic).

Reason for Inclusion: Students who are not school-ready at the beginning of kindergarten seldom catch up to their peers without a significant infusion of school and community resources.

Findings: Kalamazoo Public Schools are being challenged in providing a successful learning environment for all of its students, many of whom are facing learning barriers associated with poverty and an unstable home environment. The Comstock Public Schools are also facing difficulties while the county's other school districts are performing well.

Chart 27



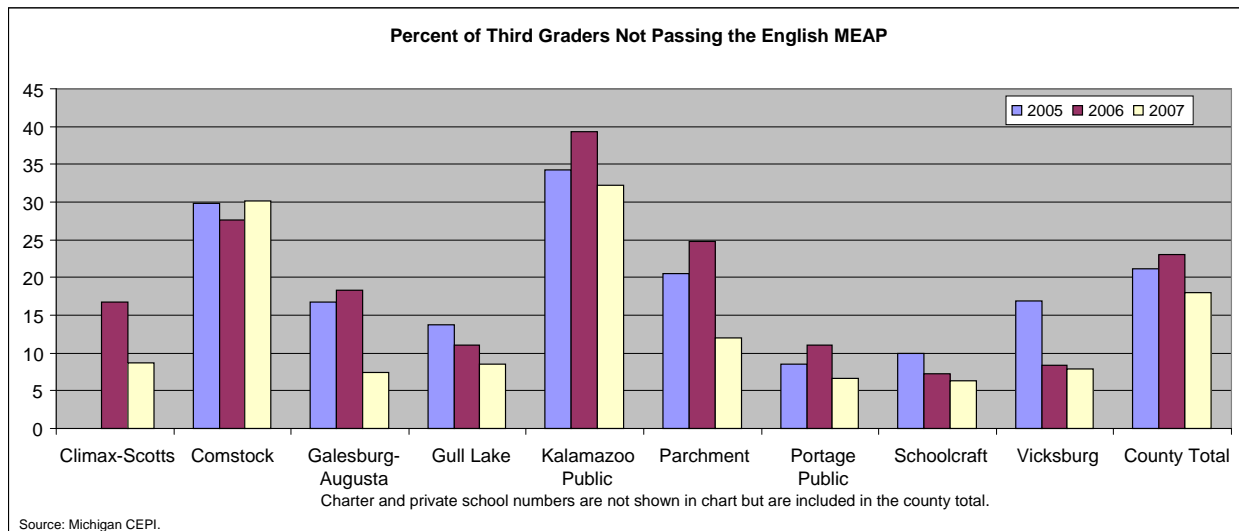
Percent of 3rd Graders Not Meeting MEAP English Language Arts Standards

Definition: The number of 3rd graders in the county whose performance on the MEAP English Language Arts test did not meet the standard; they scored at level 4 (Apprentice) or level 3 (Basic).

Reason for Inclusion: Again, students who are not school-ready at the beginning of kindergarten seldom catch up to their peers without a significant infusion of school and community resources.

Findings: As with the math MEAP, Kalamazoo Public and Comstock Public schools are struggling to create a successful environment for all their students who may be facing non-school related challenges that are hindering their ability to learn.

Chart 28



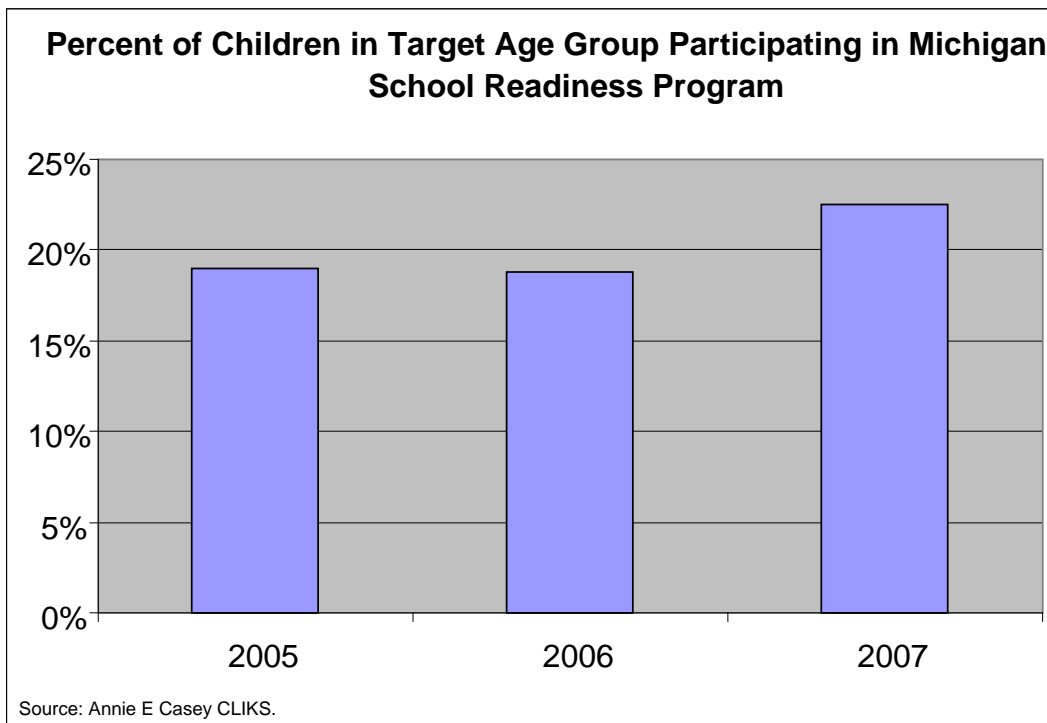
Number of Children Participating in Preschool Education Experiences

Definition: Data includes the percent of four-year-old children participating in the Michigan School Readiness Program. This program is now titled the Great Start Readiness Program which is targeted to typically developing four-year-olds.

Reason for Inclusion: Pre-kindergarten educational experiences begin at birth and provide children with opportunities for developing language, social, cognitive, and gross motor skills. Such programs prepare children to be school-ready so that they may experience success.

Findings: The percentage of four-year-olds participating in this program is increasing, suggesting that there has been a slight increase in the resources available for preschool education in the area. However, these data are only for this one program.

Chart 29



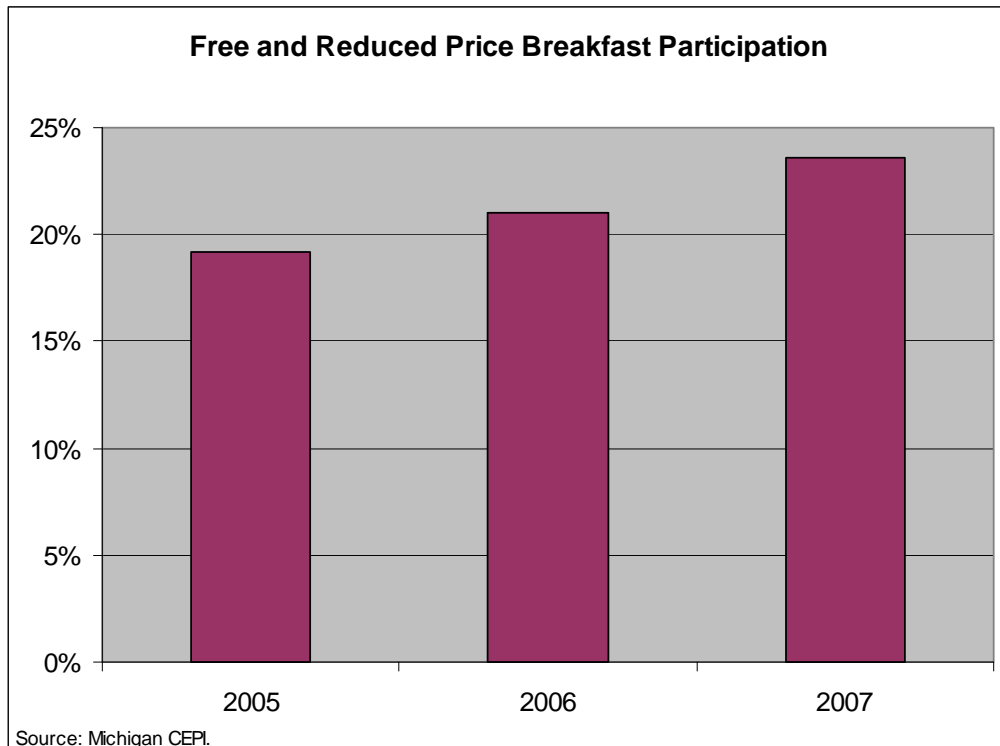
Free and Reduced Price Breakfast Rates

Definition: The percent of the county's elementary school children participating annually in the federal free and reduced price breakfast program.

Reason for inclusion: Children who begin their school day properly fed are better able to address the social, physical, emotional, and other barriers to learning.

Findings: The percent of elementary students participating in the free and reduced price breakfast program is increasing, suggesting that poverty is still a major factor in the county which can hinder many students in their abilities to succeed. At the same time, getting breakfast to children who might otherwise go hungry should enhance their overall health and ability to focus in school.

Chart 30



Appendix

Observations

The indicators related to youth, particularly those that address early childhood development and school readiness, were the most difficult to identify and collect. Few indicators and data exist in our community to track use and progress in these areas. For example, in order to measure trends related to pre-literacy skills for young children 0-5, we looked to the child care network to find indicators. Our original plan was to use the number of accredited child care sites in the county or the percent enrolled in accredited sites. Such indicators would offer measures of quality in the nature of care provided. However, we learned the number of accredited sites is decreasing because it is costly and time prohibitive to obtain and renew this accreditation. In addition, parents do not necessarily choose their providers based on the presence of such accreditation. As a result, the local child care coordinating agency is in the midst of establishing their own indicator system for identifying levels of quality care providers. The state of Michigan’s licensed homes data was considered as another option for use in this indicator system but was eliminated because licensing does not measure quality, but is instead an indicator that basic needs and safety are being met at the child care site.

A similar absence of data occurred when researching the resources to help parents prepare their children for school readiness. Programs and services exist, but data collection is minimal and service providers report that their demand for services exceeds available funding. As a result, eligibility has been narrowed for these services.

Finally, in the preparation of this report we reviewed and evaluated many indicators and determined that due to quality concerns, lack of consistent availability, and/or their duplication with indicators that were included, we eliminated them from the indicator series. Below is a sample of such indicators.

Indicators Eliminated from the Social and Economic Indicators Typifying the Community's Health		
Priority Area 1: Individuals and Families		
Indicator	Description	Rationale for Exclusion
Food assistance program usage rates (WIC, Meals on Wheels, food stamps, food pantries)	Number of individuals receiving food assistance	Data prone to revenue fluctuations and sometimes population driven
Dental and mental health activity	Number of individuals receiving mental health and/or dental services	Prone to revenue fluctuations, marketing and public awareness, agency effect and data availability
Michigan Works! 90-day employment retention rates	Number of adult Michigan Works! participants who are still employed 90 days after starting a job	Data prone to revenue fluctuations and sometimes population driven
Domestic violence reports to law enforcement	Number of domestic violence incidents	Prone to agency effect

Number of adult protective services referrals received	Referrals received by county Department of Human Services staff that merit further investigation	Numbers very small and year-to-year fluctuations equally minimal
Personal bankruptcy	Individuals filing for bankruptcy	Measure not targeted to population under review—focus is on safety net families
Kalamazoo County health insurance coverage status	Individuals under 65 years of age who do not have insurance	Information not annually updated on the American Community Survey
Priority Area 2: Economic and Community Development		
Indicator	Description	Rationale
City and Out-County Comparisons—vacancy rates and vehicles available	Tracks housing conditions and transportation needs for the City of Kalamazoo and City of Portage compared to the rest of the county	Indicator redundant
Downtown business activity	Number of businesses operating in the downtown Kalamazoo district	Indicator not an appropriate measure of business health
Openness to diversity	Number of alternative entertainment venues, number of individuals living with unmarried partners, number of individuals living abroad, number of individuals foreign born	Unable to define indicator. Suggest following up with community foundation network to determine how/if other communities monitor diversity
Bus ridership	Number of Metro Transit and/or Care-A-Van riders annually	Prone to agency effect, revenue fluctuations and student usage
Number of individuals unsuccessfully taking the GED test.	Number of individuals taking the general equivalency diploma preparation test annually	Prone to revenue fluctuations and agency effect
Tax foreclosures	Number of residential properties foreclosed due to delinquent tax payments	Not a good short-run indicator due to significant macro-economic fluctuations
Priority Area 3: Youth Development		
Indicator	Description	Rationale
Membership in youth organizations	Number of youth connected through scouting, sports, the arts, religious organizations	Data availability
Youth participating in the VolunTEENs program	Number of youth who seek referrals for age appropriate (13-18 years of age) volunteer opportunities	Prone to agency effect and public awareness and data quality concerns

Priority Area 4: Early Childhood Learning and School Readiness		
Indicator	Description	Rationale
Percent of children in families with child support owed.	Number of children in homes where child support is owed	Prone to agency effect
Kindergarten graduation rates	Number of children moving to first grade after one year of kindergarten attendance	Kindergarten not mandatory; criteria for progression varies across districts
Public library cards or children's library usage	Number of children with library cards or library program attendance as a measure of literacy rich homes for children ages 0-5	Indicator not a consistent measure for parent and family dynamics (socio-economic, racial, educational, ethnic and geographic considerations).
Number of licensed child care providers in the county.	Number of State of Michigan licensed homes within the county	Does not measure quality beyond basic needs and safety
Percent participating in accredited childcare	Annual number of children enrolled in homes and centers certified by the National Association for the Education of Young Children	Accreditation is costly to pursue and renew—centers are finding the benefits of the process and status do not warrant these costs. Previously accredited sites are foregoing the process due to cost.
Children placed in out of home care (abuse, neglect and delinquency)	The number of children ages 0-17 in facilities or in other out-of-home placements supervised by DHS or the courts, including children placed with a relative or guardian	Prone to fluctuating policy priorities related to assisting families to stay together versus placing children out of the home