

# 2019-2020 **ROUNDTABLE** *Report*

2019-2020 ROUNDTABLE REPORT

SCRANTON AREA  
*Community* FOUNDATION

CREATING CHARITABLE CONNECTIONS *for regional prosperity*

Throughout 2019 and into 2020, the Scranton Area Community Foundation hosted a series of issue-specific roundtables aimed at taking a deeper look at some of the challenges facing the Northeastern Pennsylvania region. These areas were selected for various reasons: they were not covered in significant depth at the 2018 Community Forums; there is significant interest from philanthropists to encourage a more thorough discussion; or there is a particular perceived need or opportunity in the issue area.

The four topic areas covered in 2019 were **Food Insecurity**, **Animal Welfare**, **Reintegration from the Prison System**, and **Community & Civic Engagement**. A fifth roundtable discussion, **Housing for Opportunity: A Roundtable Discussion** was held in February 2020, focusing on housing needs and opportunities across Northeastern Pennsylvania.

## Table of Contents

4	Food Insecurity
8	Animal Welfare
11	Reintegration from the Prison System
15	Community & Civic Engagement
17	Housing for Opportunity
20	Next Steps: Looking Forward
21	List of Participants

Videotapings of the  
Roundtable Discussions  
can be accessed at:  
[vimeo.com/user46660615](https://vimeo.com/user46660615)





A portrait of Laura Ducceschi, President and CEO of the Scranton Area Community Foundation. She is a woman with long, wavy brown hair, smiling at the camera. She is wearing a dark blue pinstriped blazer over a light blue lace-trimmed top. The background is a soft-focus indoor setting with a framed picture on the wall.

# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

At the Scranton Area Community Foundation, we serve as a charitable partner, a grantmaker, and a catalyst and convener around issues that matter to our region. This roundtable report is a compilation of information gained from discussions held in 2019 and early 2020 on various topics of interest to our donors, other funders, participating organizations, and community leaders.

Following the open forum for nonprofit organizations we held in June 2018, there were several issues that weren't represented in detail at the forum which warranted further discussion. These issues were the topic areas of Food Insecurity, Civic Engagement, Reintegration from the Prison System, Animal Welfare, and Housing which make up the roundtable discussions in this report.

While challenges in each of the topic areas addressed in the roundtables are discussed in this report, so are the many entry points of opportunity where participants state that additional attention and resources can make a difference. Our board of governors and staff believe that access to timely information on community challenges is critical in helping to proactively address them. While challenges in each of the topic areas addressed in the roundtables are discussed in this report, so are the many entry points of opportunity where participants state that additional attention and resources can make a difference. Our board of governors and staff believe that access to timely information on community challenges is critical in helping to proactively address them. We also believe that this information is of great importance in order to inform interested philanthropists on how they, too, can make a difference. In several cases, as you will see in this report, the Foundation has been asked to convene a collaborative, or in some cases additional discussions, by interested organizations and partners who want to work collaboratively in this area. We encourage this and are proud to facilitate these important regional conversations and efforts toward change.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura".

Laura Ducceschi  
President & CEO



# FOOD INSECURITY

Hosted on Wednesday, April 10, 2019, at the Hilton Scranton & Conference Center, the Food Insecurity Roundtable was precipitated by the awareness that challenges exist in our community related to or exacerbated by food insecurity. These issues include: health problems, children experiencing negative outcomes at school, food deserts, and food and nutrition illiteracy. The forum's purpose was to gain perspective from local organizations in order to identify opportunities to build capacity, maximize impact, build new systems, innovate practices, and analyze current methods for food delivery. Facilitator Barbara Norton welcomed organizations whose principal mission is to deliver food, those whose clients are impacted by food insecurity, as well as foundations and other funders who provide support for this issue.



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life.<sup>1</sup>



As of 2019, Luzerne and Lackawanna County ranked equally with 12% of the individuals in both counties reported as food insecure.<sup>2</sup>

Among those food insecure individuals,

- Only 64% qualified for food stamps,
- Almost 20% of all children are defined as food insecure in both counties, and
- There was a \$14 million shortfall in available dollars for food in Lackawanna County, and a \$20.6 million shortfall in Luzerne County.

Roundtable participants identified six main food insecurity issues and some steps forward:

### **DIMINISHING VOLUNTEER NUMBERS**

Participants noted that the number of volunteers for meal programs is decreasing, including volunteers from churches that have since closed.

#### **>> Opportunities**

Sometimes the problem is only a matter of connecting willing volunteers with organizations who need them. Representatives from a few groups present at the roundtable mentioned that they had volunteers available (the Junior League of Scranton and Lackawanna College). One organization (Friends of the Poor) mentioned that caseworkers were needed more than volunteers. Resources for salary and benefits would replace the need for volunteers in some cases.

### **HOURS OF OPERATION AND DIFFICULTY IN CONNECTING PEOPLE TO RESOURCES**

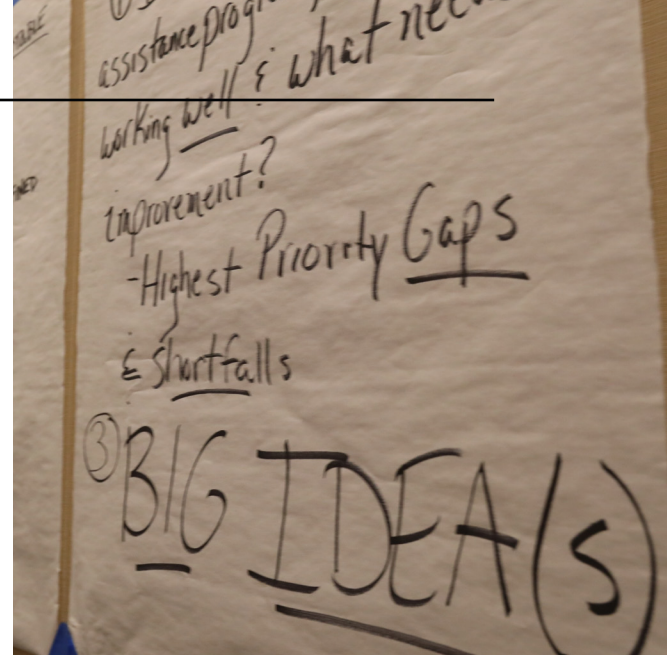
Food pantries in the area mainly operate only during the work day. Working people are unable to access the pantries when they are open. The Luzerne County Food Pantry saw an increase of over 800 clients in 6 months by changing their hours of operation. A number of organizations expressed the need for a database that would allow people to look up the closest food pantry to their location.

#### **>> Opportunities**

Increased evening and weekend hours at food pantries and distribution centers would help to mitigate this problem. Regarding a database of food resources, the representative from PA 211 pointed out that PA 211 has access to a database that covers the entire state. Individuals may call 211 at any time (the line operates 24/7) to find the closest resource. Additionally, in 2017, the Scranton Area Community Foundation worked in partnership through NEPA Moves with NEPA Alliance, CEO/Weinberg, The United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties and additional members of the Lackawanna County Food Policy Council, to create a **Geographic Information System (GIS) Mapping Tool** highlighting Food Pantry locations across various counties in NEPA. From conversations at the roundtable discussion, there is an opportunity to more widely promote and distribute this important and valuable resource.







### LACK OF FRESH FOOD AND FOOD AND NUTRITION LITERACY

Participants indicated that there are some issues with risk management that discourage the inclusion of fresh food at food pantries. Also discussed was the issue of a general lack of local food and related distribution systems in place to get it to the people who need it most. In addition, many people do not know how to prepare various fresh foods, or healthy food in general. This seems to be an issue for the general population but even more so for vulnerable populations like the disabled and elderly. Various other demographics may also struggle with budgeting out food stamps over the course of a month.

#### >> Opportunities

Some groups see promise in 'grow your own' campaigns. One individual mentioned the prolific gardens of Bhutanese immigrants, in front of the immigrants' homes or in community gardens and opportunities to share this knowledge. Participants discussed potential programs for children that could teach them how to grow and prepare vegetables which would help address food literacy at an early age. For example, The Greenhouse Project already carries out this mission by teaching people how to grow and prepare their own food. Penn State Cooperative, through the Catherine McAuley Center, also teaches food preparation. Geisinger brought the idea of a "Fresh Food Pharmacy" to the region, which works to eliminate access and cost barriers to food which in turn let people concentrate on their health.

A local farmer at the Roundtable vocalized his desire to bring back a local farming community. He said it would require working together to bring about a guaranteed place to sell products, whether it be a farm store or through community supported agriculture (CSA).

### TRANSPORTATION

Many organizations mentioned the lack of transportation or reliable transportation to food pantries and other programs that help with food insecurity.

#### >> Opportunities

Some organizations are meeting the need where it is with delivery to areas that are not served by reliable public transportation. Participants suggested that a mobile pantry in Lackawanna County would help with access barriers. One participant suggested that there should be more programs that send children home from school with food rather than requiring them to go somewhere to get it. The Scranton Area Community Foundation has spearheaded NEPA Moves, which works to improve equitable access to transportation.



## VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Children, college students, individuals with intellectual disabilities, and the elderly were discussed as populations who were particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. The director of the Lackawanna County Area Agency on Aging pointed out that \$1.3 million is spent on food for seniors each year and this does not nearly cover the population in need. It was also noted that the average income of seniors in Northeastern Pennsylvania is \$997 a month.

The needs of children have also reached a level of crisis. As of 2019, 94% of the children in Scranton School Districts qualify for free or reduced lunch<sup>3</sup> and 84% live below the poverty line<sup>4</sup>. A representative from Here for a Reason, a nonprofit organization seeking to address the issue of food insecurity in Northeastern Pennsylvania, pointed out that education is secondary to food needs and that schools have become the default community resource.

### >> Opportunities

“Grab and go” resources have worked for college students who wish to avoid the stigma of a traditional food pantry. Schools and other organizations such as Here for a Reason are handing out food where the need exists rather than a centralized location.

## STIGMA

The stigma of publicly accepting food, whether it be at a food pantry or at school, was a recurring concern of the roundtable.

### >> Opportunities

One organization has created a “food pantry without walls” where food is delivered to organizations that serve populations in need, such as the Children’s Service Center, or directly to homes, allowing people to receive food without walking into a food pantry. United Community Outreach, located at the Peckville Assembly of God, has established a drive-through food distribution center to help combat food insecurity.

Another way to combat stigma is to create ownership or “buy-in”. PathStone, an organization with locations in both Luzerne and Lackawanna County which aims to build self-sufficiency for those who have been incarcerated, reported that some of their clients volunteered at the Weinberg Food Bank and loved the experience. Community gardens could be managed and overseen by those who need the food. In a similar manner, there is an opportunity for a community grocery to operate as a co-op that is for, and operated by, community members.

## STEPS FORWARD

Some ideas set forth by the roundtable are easy to act upon and are currently being worked on. Others are considered “Big Picture Ideas” and will require time and continued collaboration. These include:

- Establishing A community-owned grocery store based on a “Community Benefit Business Organization” model and a “pay as you can” system.
- Increasing the number of caseworkers at food pantries, which requires funding for salary and benefits.
- Developing a Food Hub in Scranton which would allow local farms to grow and distribute their food locally.
- Increasing and enhancing the education available at food pantries and through other services which address the root causes of hunger.
- Creating a large health care center under the concept of “Food as Medicine” that addresses food insecurity in a more holistic manner.
- Development of a mobile pantry that provides fresh healthy food to economically disadvantaged and/or rural areas with access and transportation issues.

**The Lackawanna County Food Policy Council** meets regularly and works to address food insecurity. Many of the issues set forth at the roundtable are discussed by the Council. The Scranton Area Community Foundation is also committed to continuing to hear ideas, making connections, and working in partnership to develop a community investment strategy regarding this important issue of **food insecurity** in the region.



# ANIMAL WELFARE

On Tuesday, June 11, 2019, at the Hilton Scranton & Conference Center, the Scranton Area Community Foundation hosted a [Roundtable Discussion on the topic of Animal Welfare](#) across the Northeastern Pennsylvania region (NEPA). The purpose of the roundtable was to gain a comprehensive picture of the challenges, barriers, and opportunities related to the welfare of animals across the region.

The Scranton Area Community Foundation welcomed all organizations and individuals that are working on issues regarding animal welfare in NEPA, including humane educators, animal shelters, animal rescue organizations, individual animal rescuers, veterinary service providers, animal advocates, and those addressing other important regional issues. Grant makers and philanthropists interested in collaborating and learning more about how to make an impact on these issues were invited as well. Organizations and individuals from multiple counties across NEPA, including Lackawanna, Luzerne, Susquehanna, Bradford, Sullivan, and Wyoming attended.

Over forty participants from across the region attended this animal welfare roundtable discussion. Participants addressed a variety of topic areas including animal cruelty, responsible pet ownership, policy legislation, pet adoptions and fosters, trap-neuter-release initiatives, farm animal welfare, and wildlife.





Attendees were asked to place importance on the topics of interest to them, which served to spearhead the dialogue.

### ANIMAL WELFARE ISSUES DISCUSSED

Safety Net Programs  
Home Education  
Animal Cruelty  
Responsible Pet Ownership  
Policy Legislation  
Pet Adoptions

Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) Initiatives  
Community Cats  
Wildlife  
Farm Animal Welfare  
Adequate Foster Placements

Community Engagement  
Collaborations  
Adequate Transport  
Humane Eating  
Fundraising

### TOPICS THAT RECEIVED FOCUS DURING THE ANIMAL WELFARE ROUNDTABLE:

- The concept of NEPA becoming a no-kill region, and the barriers/goals involved such as the existence of puppy mills and pet stores selling animals.
- The concept of public awareness and a need for comprehensive public education on the importance of adopting a rescued animal, spay/neuter, and the concept of responsible pet ownership.
- A forum for shelter rescue and other animal welfare educators to collaborate and share resources.
- Finding homes for animals with specific challenges, and the need to increase the number of appropriate foster homes and related volunteers, whose expectations are managed about the patience and related aspects required.
- A need for education on topics such as grant writing, fundraising, and advocacy to enable shelter and rescue organizations, many which are staffed by volunteers, to be impactful in their efforts.







### STEPS FORWARD

The consensus was to reconvene the group for additional collaborative meetings in order to address issues of shared interest to participants. There were two subsequent roundtables held in October and December of 2019 which further refined the vision and mission of the collaborative. Particular areas of focus moving forward include:

- Developing a set of best practices and standards for animal shelters and rescues to work toward.
- Providing opportunities for education and training on effective legislation and advocacy, fundraising, and marketing for animal welfare workers and volunteers.
- Improving the number of available foster placements for homeless animals, and the training of these fosters so that they can be successful.
- Expanding availability and funding of spay/neuter and TNR services to humanely curb the population of homeless animals.
- Expanding access to veterinarians who are interested in helping to address these issues.
- Helping elderly, disabled, or economically disadvantaged individuals keep their companion animals.

The Scranton Times-Tribune published the following articles shining a positive light on our important work in animal welfare:

<https://www.thetimes-tribune.com/news/roundtable-discusses-animal-welfare-challenges-in-region-1.2495056>

<https://www.thetimes-tribune.com/news/state-humane-society-director-tours-animal-shelters-praises-group-for-advocacy-1.2597281>

### INTRODUCING THE NEPA ANIMAL WELFARE COLLABORATIVE

The NEPA Animal Welfare Collaborative is a project of The Scranton Area Community Foundation. Established in 2019, the NEPA Animal Welfare Collaborative is a collective of animal shelters, rescues, advocates, and sanctuaries in the region that are interested in coming together to advance various causes in animal welfare and to increase the collective resources available to these agencies. Activities of the collaborative include education, professional development, fundraising and other practices that move the goals of the collaborative forward. The Scranton Area Community Foundation serves as the convener of the NEPA Animal Welfare Collaborative.

**NEPA**  
*Animal*  
*Welfare*  
Collaborative



# REINTEGRATION FROM THE PRISON SYSTEM

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, more than three-quarters of state offenders are re-arrested within five years of release from prison. <sup>5</sup>

On Thursday, August 22, 2019, at the Hilton Scranton & Conference Center, the Scranton Area Community Foundation, [in partnership with Outreach - Center for Community Resources](#), hosted a roundtable discussion to explore the re-entry challenges and obstacles facing those transitioning out of the prison system and into communities across our region. The intention was to gain a comprehensive picture of the barriers faced by these individuals in order to identify potential opportunities, build or enhance collaborations, and to provide insight to foundations, donors and philanthropic partners.

This roundtable enumerated the ways in which individuals are faced with many barriers that often prevent their success, and offered potential solutions that could help to break the cycle of recidivism.



## HEALTHCARE CHALLENGES

Many individuals released from prison face physical and behavioral health issues, with participants at the roundtable indicating that:

- Some individuals who are transitioning out of the prison system feel disrespected in the healthcare community in general. Individuals facing addiction—particularly intravenous drug users—perceive a lack of empathy from caregivers.
- Access to affordable medical care can also be a problem as many qualify for Medicaid but cannot apply while in prison.
- Individuals leave prison with only three days' worth of prescription drugs, and often have a longer wait before they can get a prescription filled. Often, these individuals are suffering from behavioral or other health issues that need constant medication and if not treated, can cause significant issues for the individual.

## EMPLOYMENT DIFFICULTIES

There are many employers who will not hire a person who has been incarcerated.

- Prerequisites often exist, e.g. an individual must be out of prison for six months or one year, in order to successfully apply for a job.
- Time is wasted filling out applications for jobs that are unattainable when individuals are unaware of the company pre-requisites or similar do-not-hire policies.
- Many of these individuals do not have a permanent address, which can be a barrier to finding employment.

Some individuals are unable to work due to health issues, lack of housing, or other immediate challenges

- Those applying for social security benefits cannot work when applying which exacerbates a cycle of poverty.

## HOUSING CHALLENGES

Landlords may not accept individuals who have been incarcerated for various reasons. It is standard for a landlord to require first month's rent and a security deposit. Without a job it is difficult to raise this money and without an address it is difficult to obtain a job. Many landlords are reluctant to take what they may feel could be a risk on tenants with criminal records.

### >> Opportunities

Participants outlined the following new/ underutilized solutions and suggestions for steps forward:

- Compilation of a list of employers who will not hire individuals with criminal records or a list of required prerequisites so that individuals do not fill out applications for which they cannot be successful.
- Developing partnerships between school districts and nonprofit providers. For example, Marley's Mission, which provides equine therapy, will work with children of parents who have been incarcerated, free of charge.
- Provide trainings on the process and steps necessary to apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), a federal program that can supplement the food budget of families in need.
- Education and awareness for employers on federal bonding, which provides six months of employment for "hard-to-place" job-seekers at no cost to the employer or employee.
- Support for housing programs like those offered by the Catherine McAuley Center, which provides six months of rental housing for formerly incarcerated women, where each person is assigned a caseworker, which can be a critical component of the reintegration process. However, the need for housing currently exceeds the capacity to house these individuals.



## >> Opportunities (continued)

- Other housing programs, such as those offered through PathStone, could partner two people on parole as roommates to help make housing affordable.
- Development of a housing sub-community, and support for transitional housing, such as halfway houses and sober houses.
- Strengthening and supporting the re-entry task force which can communicate and coordinate between those working towards the same goals. Additional participation and/or resources provided to a collaborative entity where various stakeholders can help to strengthen any gaps may lead to greater success. There is funding available for re-entry just as there is funding available for homelessness.
- Support for financial training and related programs offered through the Educational Opportunity Center and related providers.
- Support for new, peer-driven recovery support services, such as the Recovery Bank in Scranton that may be helpful to individuals facing addictions.
- Expanding mentoring programs may help first time, non-violent offenders between 18-25 years old.
- Designing and implementing programs through an equity lens or equity framework can help to address the barriers that can contribute to incarceration and recidivism.



**OPPORTUNITY  
AHEAD**



**POST-ROUNDTABLE UPDATE from Outreach - Center for Community Resources**

- The roundtable provided a platform for connecting Outreach to other service providers in the community by creating awareness about Outreach and what they do for this population. For example, an employer, Cascade Tissue Group, connected with Outreach at the roundtable and now provides instruction on employment expectations for Outreach's Women's Group.
- Outreach has identified a need for more data collection including improving the tracking of the women served through their program, documenting their employment struggles and successes.
- Outreach suggested holding subsequent meetings with educational providers such as Johnson College, and other key partners such as Educational Opportunity Center, to help assist and prepare women for the workforce.

**STEPS FORWARD**

In addition to the details above, the following opportunities may exist:

- Continue to work on issues with the re-entry task force. When appropriate, expand the participation in this task force. Participants indicated that they found value in the ideas that came from the roundtable discussion as well as the connections created by it and may wish to participate on a continued scale.
- Create a vision statement and strategic plan for re-entry efforts in the region which defines objectives and goals.
- Explore the concept of developing a pharmacist network. Early discussions with local pharmacists indicate that setting up a pharmacist network could be an achievable goal. The network would help individuals who leave prison with only a three-day supply of prescription drugs until they can get the full prescriptions filled.
- Expand partnership opportunities which benefit those returning from incarceration, such as assisting with employment.
- Continue to develop an employment pipeline through the LEADership, Education and Development Organization (LEAD), which assists the re-entry population in obtaining self-sustaining job opportunities
- Seek solutions to additional barriers such as transportation and child care options, through partnerships with NEPA Moves and other initiatives and organizations.





# COMMUNITY & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Scranton Area Community Foundation hosted a Civic Engagement Roundtable Breakfast Meeting, co-facilitated by Rosemary Broderick, Chair of the Scranton Area Community Foundation Board of Governors, and William Scranton, III, on Tuesday, October 29, 2019, at the Radisson Lackawanna Station Hotel.

## THE ISSUES DISCUSSED

### INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT

The discussion centered on engaging people who do not traditionally have a voice in areas of advocacy and community leadership. Participants indicated that additional efforts should center around making all segments of the population feel as if their voice matters, be more inclusive, and to engage and retain these stakeholders. It also includes intentional recruitment efforts for specific populations and setting forth agendas that have priorities that are inclusive. A discussion focused on a need for efforts to encourage and support new immigrant groups and cultures in an effort to build civic leaders. Diversity and inclusion on boards was noted as critical, as current boards need to commit to fostering both the ideas of new participants and a respect for differences.

### CULTIVATING A NEW GENERATION OF CIVIC LEADERS

In terms of preparing younger individuals to serve on local nonprofit boards, key points of discussion included prioritizing succession planning, the concept of episodic engagement, modifying board structures to be more attractive to younger generations, and the responsibility of current board members to mentor the next generation.

- Financial requirements to serve on boards can be prohibitive to participants of various demographics.
- The time commitment for boards is often prohibitive to younger people as they build their careers and/or families.

### COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES TO ENCOURAGE ENGAGEMENT

Participants noted specific generational preferences that are evident in the communication of civic engagement opportunities, such as digital versus face to face conversations. The roundtable also discussed the importance of leveraging technology to make individuals feel a closer connection to specific issues and organizations. The concept of striking a balance between personal requests and automated communications was deemed to be important.



## >> Opportunities

- Supporting organizations like Leadership Lackawanna through tracking alumni in their current and future leadership roles.
- Streamlining boards to make service more realistic. Revising board construction for the changing times which could include smaller executive boards with larger committees that require a smaller time commitment.
- Involving K-12 school districts, in particular school boards, in conversations, as children are often the bridge to building trust with parents from new immigrant communities.
- Creating partnerships between organizations such as Leadership Lackawanna and the United Neighborhood Centers (UNC) Leadership training program which builds leadership amongst various demographics.
- Creating support from boards and executive leadership regarding support for leadership training for middle level management.
- Replacing the requirement for board members to contribute a certain amount of funding to the organization with a “give/get” or volunteering focus.

## STEPS FORWARD

Scranton Area Community Foundation will continue to foster the discussion on advancing and encouraging opportunities for engagement in civil society in conjunction with our community partners by hosting a larger roundtable on the issue on March 26, 2020. Entitled *Community and Civic Engagement - a Fresh Perspective*, this follow-up convening will focus on carving out the dominant themes into focused discussion areas that arose from the initial discussion. New pilot opportunities will be considered based on the information that came out of the initial roundtable. Ideas will be refined in the broader discussions planned for Spring 2020.





# HOUSING

**ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2020**, the Scranton Area Community Foundation, in partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, the Lackawanna County Housing Coalition, NeighborWorks of Northeastern Pennsylvania, and Geisinger, hosted *Housing for Opportunity: A Roundtable Discussion*.

Nearly sixty participants, including representatives from state and local government, realtors, developers and social service providers, came together to discuss the issues and barriers surrounding affordable and accessible housing and the discussion focused on the entire housing ecosystem in Lackawanna County.

The Institute for Public Policy and Economic Development provided statistics on affordable and accessible housing in Lackawanna County. According to the Institute, nearly 40% of housing in Lackawanna County was built prior to 1939, suggesting that houses across the county generally require a higher level of repair and maintenance. The aged housing stock in Lackawanna County also predisposes the community to blight, the Institute suggested. Additionally, levels of new construction are low in recent years and there is a lack of accessible housing for disabled people and a lack of mobility-impaired subsidized housing units. High levels of seniors in Lackawanna County living alone (13,620 in 2017) and an increasing wealth disparity (14.5% of people living in poverty in 2017 versus 10.6% in 2010), compound the problem.

The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia described the affordability versus quality tradeoff where people in the area are often sacrificing suitability of housing for attainability, along with their health and wellbeing. Children, the disabled, and older adults are particularly vulnerable to this

trade off. According to a report called *Measuring and Understanding Home Repair Costs: A National Typology of Households*, in the Middle Atlantic Region, more than one third of households have housing quality issues.<sup>6</sup> Another report, *Home Improvement Lending in the Third Federal Reserve District: Patterns by Income, Race and Gender*, explains that between 2015 and 2017, almost half (49.2%) of loan applications from low and moderate income (LMI) applicants in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton area were denied. Denial rates were highest for LMI women with no co applicants (51.1%) and Hispanic or Latino LMI applicants (72.9%). The median loan amount applied for in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre area between 2015-2017 was \$10,000.<sup>7</sup>



Following the information from the Institute for Public Policy and Economic Development and the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, the next part of the day consisted of breakout discussion groups. In the first of two separate sessions, participants were asked what they saw as the **top housing challenges** facing our neighbors in Lackawanna County and then were asked to **identify the best areas and opportunities for collaboration** to address key housing issues.



## THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THESE CONVERSATIONS INCLUDED:

Lackawanna County has an aging population and an aging housing stock. There is a lack of safe and affordable housing (for ownership and rental) for aging in place.

### >> Opportunities

- Develop a collaborative/cohesive lending application process that is user friendly for all ages, etc.
- Additional senior housing would open inventory for new homeowners.

People with Disabilities— those looking for both public and market rate housing—lack accessible options.

### >> Opportunities

- Public/private collaborative partnerships are needed to create accessible housing stock. The demand, both in the private and public housing sectors, is great.
- Grant funding for the purpose of creating more accessible housing would encourage developers/service organizations.

There is a lack of suitable housing without needed repairs for Low to Moderate Income (LMI) households, with rental costs rising. People re-entering the community from the prison system have even less opportunity than the general public.

### >> Opportunities

- Educating consumers on lending issues as well as educating contractors regarding the needs/preferences of potential renters/buyers would benefit many.

Repair needs escalate over time, and lending barriers exist, making financing for repairs a significant barrier for many.

### >> Opportunities

- Early intervention and safety nets can break the cycle of needed repairs escalating.

### >> Opportunities (continued)

- For rental housing, landlords should be held accountable for suitability/repairs.
- Education about financial products is needed.

There is lack of housing near employment corridors, grocery stores, medical facilities, etc.

### >> Opportunities

- Extend the affordable and accessible housing roundtable to discuss holistic solutions that consider transportation, workforce needs, etc.
- Meet with developers about transportation and infrastructure concerns.
- Participation in NEPA Moves, the Scranton Area Community Foundation's initiative on equitable transportation, can bring solutions for the two issues closer together.

There aren't enough LMI purchase options and incentives, and there is an inability of LMI households to afford repairs and maintenance. Small-scale landlords may lack the ability to adequately maintain or repair the units.

### >> Opportunities

- Education is needed to provide information about existing programs, including the Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Program (LERTA), which incentivizes the rehabilitation of aging housing stock.
- There is an opportunity to streamline the Section 8 process by using incentives and providing more education for landlords
- Home repair grants may be a solution
- LMI homebuyers may be interested in training on home maintenance and minor repairs.



**THE SECOND SET OF BREAK OUT DISCUSSIONS** included six different focus areas and how they related to/impacted housing. The areas of focus were affordable housing, transportation, the aging population (senior housing/aging in place), health, blight and neighborhood revitalization and urban living and adaptive reuse.

**THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THESE CONVERSATIONS INCLUDED:**

The challenge of providing and maintaining enough affordable housing for people with disabilities, older adults or individuals with mental health, addiction or legal issues is a major challenge.

>> Opportunities

- Legal assistance offered to people who may be eligible for record expungement.
- Additional education geared toward the private sector would be useful.
- Additional focus on public/private partnerships.

People face a lack of transportation options to get to work, with distance and location of bus stops as a barrier. Those who work second and third shifts often lack transportation services at these off hours.

>> Opportunities

- Greater collaboration between employers and transit providers could result in better routes, better timing and location of stops and greater access to business parks.
- GIS technology could be leveraged to facilitate better service to employment centers.
- Participation in NEPA Moves, the Scranton Area Community Foundation's initiative on equitable transportation, can bring solutions for the two issues closer together.

Older Adults often face fixed income and rising rents. Older adults may also face health risks and barriers as well as predatory financial products.

>> Opportunities

- Financial counseling, including homeownership counseling, should be made a priority.
- With multigenerational households, a whole-family approach may be necessary.
- Technology has the potential to enhance/maintain independent living in some cases.

Blight is common and there is a great need for neighborhood revitalization.

>> Opportunities

- Zoning and code enforcement laws need to be revised.
- There is opportunity for mixed-use and additional development across income levels.
- Incentives for developers are needed to facilitate affordability as well as conditions that promote walking and biking.

Urban living and adaptive reuse should be promoted more effectively.

>> Opportunities

- The county needs more ranch/single level homes, particularly for seniors.
- Zoning to address multi-generational housing could be addressed.





The Scranton Area Community Foundation has committed to convening partners including NeighborWorks NEPA, the Lackawanna County Housing Coalition, and other participants from the Housing roundtable discussion for an additional two forums in 2020. The goal of these convenings will be to focus on developing strategies to address various opportunities that were identified at the roundtable.

## Next Steps: **LOOKING FORWARD**

The Scranton Area Community Foundation understands the importance of continuing the dialogue around these important issues for our region, as well as our role in helping provide a focused lens to these and the many other important discussion topics that help drive our communities forward.



We take our responsibility as a catalyst for change and a regional convener very seriously, and we value the time and contributions of our discussion participants. We hope that this report provides a basic blueprint for philanthropic possibilities and opportunities for the next steps forward as we work in conjunction with our generous donors, partnering foundations, and community leaders to suggest, inform, and guide regional progress.

*We are your community foundation.* **Today. Tomorrow. Forever.**

## CREATING CHARITABLE CONNECTIONS

*for regional prosperity*



# List of Participants

The following organizations actively participated in our 2019-2020 Roundtables. A color-coded "+" sign indicates the specific roundtable that the organization attended. The Scranton Area Community Foundation is grateful for the support from all of the organizations and individuals who participated. We provide this list as a guide to help further the discussions.

Food Insecurity +

Animal Welfare +

Reintegration of the Prison System +

Community and Civic Engagement +

Housing for Opportunity +

Adopt a Boxer Rescue +	Meals on Wheels +
Allied Services ++	Moses Taylor Foundation +++
Al Beech Food Pantry +	NeighborWorks NEPA ++
Animal Care Association - Scranton +	NEPA Pet Fund and Rescue +
Boys & Girls Clubs of NEPA +	Nonprofit & Community Assistance Center (NCAC)+
Bread Basket of NEPA +	Office of PA House of Rep. Bridget M. Kosierowski +
Catherine McAuley Center +++	Office of PA House of Rep. Kyle Mullins +
Catholic Social Services ++	Office of PA House of Rep. Marty Flynn +
City of Scranton ++	Office of PA State Senator John Blake +
Classic Properties +	Office of PA State Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr. +
County of Lackawanna Transit System +	Outreach - Center for Community Resources ++
Center for Independent Living +	PA Prison Society +
Dress for Success Lackawanna +	PowerRail, Inc. +
Education Opportunity Centers +	PathStone Corp ++
Finance of America +	Penn State Scranton +
Friends of the Poor ++	PNC Bank ++
Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia +	Quigley's Shelter Pets +
Geisinger +++	Salvation Army +
Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine +	Scranton Counseling Center +
Goodwill Industries +++	Scranton Homeless Coalition +
Greater MLK Commission +	Scranton-Lackawanna Head Start +
Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce ++	Scranton Primary Health Care Center ++
Greater Scranton YMCA +	Scranton Public Library +
Greenhouse Project +	Scranton School District +
Griffin Pond Animal Shelter +	Scranton Tomorrow +
Here for a Reason +	St. Cats & Dogs +
Humane Society of Wyoming County +	St. Joseph's Center ++
Indraloka Animal Sanctuary ++	The Wright Center ++
Jewish Family Services +	The Institute for Economic Dev. and Public Policy ++
Johnson College +++	Titan's Touch Canine Massage +
Keystone College ++	True Friends +
Junior League of Scranton +	United Neighborhood Centers of NEPA +++
Lackawanna College ++	United Community Outreach Food Pantry +
Lackawanna County Area Agency on Aging ++	United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties +++
Lackawanna County Treatment Court +	University of Scranton ++
Lackawanna Susquehanna BH/ID/EI Program +	University of Scranton SBDC ++
League of Women Voters +	Wayne Evans Realty +
Leahy Clinic +	West Scranton Hyde Park Neighborhood Watch +
Marley's Mission +	Women's Resource Center +
Marywood University ++	



Scranton Area Community Foundation's **Board of Governors** provides leadership, stewardship, and a focused commitment to our mission. The staff of the Scranton Area Community Foundation would like to thank the Board for their support and contribution to the roundtable convenings during the past year as well as to this report.

### Scranton Area Community Foundation 2019 Board of Governors

ROSEMARY BRODERICK  
Board Chair

KENNETH OKREPKIE  
Vice Chair

ALAN HUGHES  
Treasurer

ELLEN BURKEY  
Secretary

DONNA BARBETTI  
IDA CASTRO  
JAMES F. CLEMENTE, CPA, MT  
CHRISTOPHER DIMATTIO  
TOM DONOHUE  
PATRICK FRICCHIONE  
KATIE GILMARTIN  
BOBBY LYNETT  
BARBARA O'HARA, ESQ.  
DAVID PRICE  
MARYLA SCRANTON  
JOHN (JACK) T. TIGHE, III

### Scranton Area Community Foundation 2020 Board of Governors

KENNETH OKREPKIE  
Board Chair

ALAN HUGHES  
Vice Chair

BARBARA O'HARA, ESQ.  
Second Vice Chair

ELLEN BURKEY  
Treasurer

DAVID PRICE  
Secretary

DONNA BARBETTI  
ROSEMARY BRODERICK  
IDA CASTRO  
JAMES F. CLEMENTE, CPA, MT  
CHRISTOPHER DIMATTIO  
TOM DONOHUE  
PATRICK FRICCHIONE  
KATIE GILMARTIN  
BILL JOYCE  
DOMINIC KEATING  
BOBBY LYNETT  
JEROME MUSHENO, R.PH., ESQ.  
MARYLA SCRANTON  
JOHN (JACK) T. TIGHE, III

### Scranton Area Community Foundation Staff

LAURA DUCCESCHI, President and CEO  
NORA KERN, Executive Assistant to the President and CEO  
MAGGIE MARTINELLI, VP, Administration and Projects  
DANA HUNTER, Administration Manager  
CATHY FITZPATRICK, Grants and Scholarship Manager  
GABRIELLA FLETCHER, Grants and Scholarship Assistant  
JOEL GRABIN, Finance and Accounting Manager  
BRITTANY PAGNOTTI, Communications Manager  
VIVIAN WILLIAMS, Project Coordinator



### About the Scranton Area Community Foundation

The Scranton Area Community Foundation is on a mission to enhance the quality of life for all people in Northeastern Pennsylvania through the development of organized philanthropy. With assets of more than \$44 million and more than 200 charitable funds, the Scranton Area Community Foundation distributed over \$2 million in grants and scholarships in 2019. Additionally, through its foundation management services offered to other private and public foundations, the Scranton Area Community Foundation manages assets of more than \$31 million and distributed an additional \$1.2 million in grants and scholarships in 2019 through assets under management.

The Scranton Area Community Foundation leads various initiatives including **Women in Philanthropy**, the **Center for Community Leadership and Nonprofit Excellence**, **NEPA Moves**, and the **NEPA Animal Welfare Collaborative**.

More information about the Scranton Area Community Foundation can be found at [www.safdn.org](http://www.safdn.org).



# SCRANTON AREA *Community* FOUNDATION

**WOMEN**  
IN PHILANTHROPY  
ENGAGE. EMPOWER. TRANSFORM.



**NEPA  
MOVES**  
Because Every Life Has a Destination



## REFERENCES

1. US Department of Agriculture, (2019). Definitions of Food Security. Available online at: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security.aspx>
2. Gunderson, C.A. Dewey, M. Kato, A. Crumbaugh & M. Strayer. *Map the Meal Gap 2019: A Report on County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2017*. Feeding America, 2019.
3. The Annie E. Casey Foundation Kid Count Data Center (2017) School Lunch - Students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch in Lackawanna--Scranton (Urban)
4. The Annie E. Casey Foundation Kid Count Data Center (2017) Estimated Percent of Relevant Population (Age 5-17) Under 100% Poverty by School District Using SAIPE (Percent)
5. Bureau of Justice Statistics, (2018). <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/press/18upr9yfup0514pr.cfm>
6. *Measuring and Understanding Home Repair Costs: A National Typology of Households*. 2019.
7. *Home Improvement Lending in the Third Federal Reserve District: Patterns by Income, Race and Gender*. 2018.



# SCRANTON AREA *Community* FOUNDATION

615 Jefferson Avenue, Suite 102

Scranton, PA 18510

(570) 347-6203

[safdn.org](http://safdn.org)

## 2019-2020 ROUNDTABLE REPORT

