THE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS
EST. 1913
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Big City Problems in Ohio's Small Towns

John A. Begala
Former Executive Director

November, 2016

Preface

The Center for Community Solutions is pleased to issue ***Big City Problems in Ohio's Small Towns,*** written by former Community Solutions Executive Director John Begala. John is one of the more creative Ohio policy analysts that I know, and he is never one to shy away from either the big idea or the big project—in this case, taking a comprehensive look at the economic, health, educational, and social wellbeing of 47 small Ohio cities. He is particularly well suited to the task having spent a good deal of his life living in the cities he describes in this report.

When John Begala approached me about writing this report on Ohio's small and struggling cities over a year ago, it was well before these communities and their largely White residents would become the focus of national media and politicians.

Some of this attention has been sympathetic. For example, J.D. Vance writes movingly about Middletown, Ohio in *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis.* Rod Dreher, a writer for *The American Conservative*, wrote that Vance's book "does for poor white people what Ta-Nehisi Coate's book did for poor black people: give them voice and presence in the public square." But others have taken a much more negative view. *National Review* writer Kevin Williamson wrote in March, 2016, that "the truth about these dysfunctional, downscale communities is that they deserve to die. Economically, they are negative assets. Morally, they are indefensible."

I disagree with Williamson and think its morally indefensible to just let these communities wither away as a consequence of our benign neglect.

Manufacturing was the lifeblood of these communities. According to John's report, manufacturing still provides between 16 and 17 percent of the jobs, which is double the rate of manufacturing employment found in Ohio's large cities or the nation as a whole. But Ohio small town manufacturing continues to be devastated by international trade policies which encourage manufacturers to move jobs overseas and changes in technology that result in smaller numbers of workers being needed to produce manufactured goods.

There have been numerous reports and studies lately that have documented the declining life expectancy of non-college-educated White men and women. According to a November, 2015, article in *The Atlantic,* "the reasons for the increased death rate are not the usual things that kill Americans, like diabetes and heart disease. Rather, it's suicide, alcohol and drug poisonings, and alcohol-related liver disease." A 2012 study published in *Health Affairs* found that "life expectancy for white, female high-school dropouts has fallen so much over the past 18 years that these women are now expected to die five years younger than their mothers did." One need only open the daily paper to see these casualties in real time, often the result of an Opioid overdose.

John points out that the populations of these communities are also less healthy than Ohio as a whole. Working-age adults in these communities are much more likely to be disabled than the state as a whole. Even prior to Medicaid expansion, residents of these communities were much more likely be covered by either Medicare or Medicaid than their big city neighbors. Teen birth rates are nearly double the statewide rate, creating an ever-expanding cycle of poverty and despair.

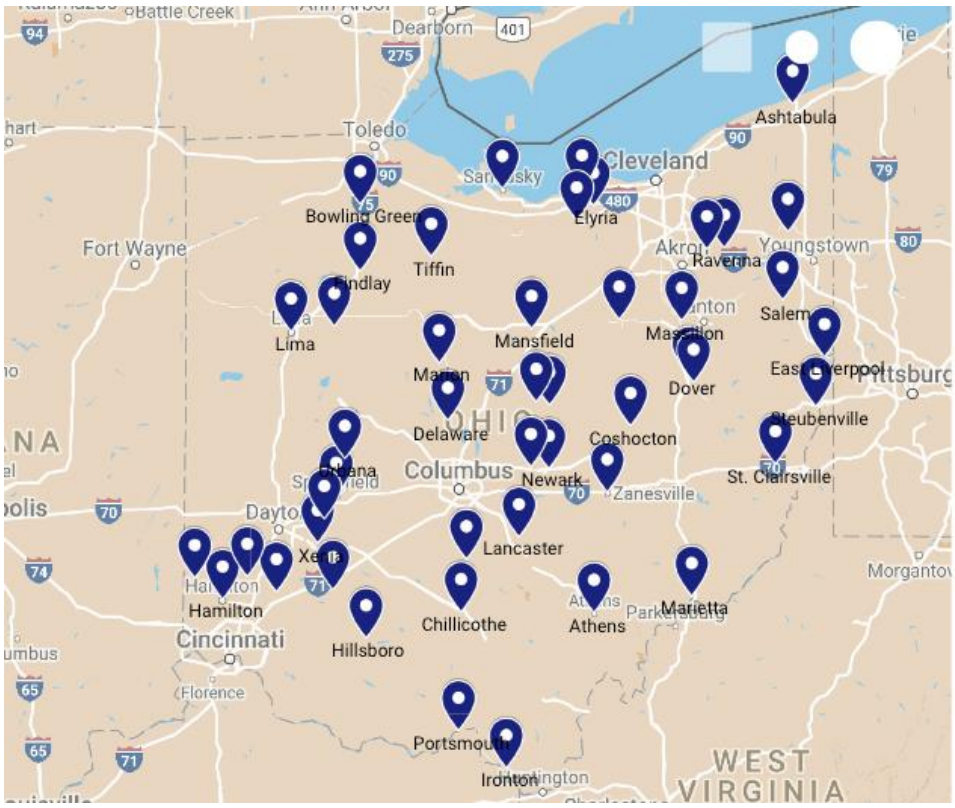
Up to now, the enormity of the challenges facing these communities may have largely gone unnoticed. But it's clear to me that without action and investment by state government, these communities will continue their downward spiral. All but a handful of these communities are represented in the Ohio General Assembly by members of the majority party. But sometimes these members embrace policies—rejecting Medicaid expansion, cutting the housing trust fund, reducing local government funding—which have a disproportionately negative impact on the very small towns that John describes in this report. A better approach might be to align their efforts with urban legislators to create an agenda that can advance the wellbeing of Ohio small cities and urban centers. Otherwise, we are, in effect, embracing the philosophy of Kevin Williamson that these communities should just fold up and die.

I hope that's not the case. Ohio would be a much culturally and economically poorer state without the contributions of these communities, which truly are the heart of Ohio.

John R. Corlett
Executive Director and President
The Center for Community Solutions

Executive Summary

For all the cultural, social, and political forces that conspire to separate and divide "big city" and "small town," and for all that is written about Ohio as a microcosm of the nation's "culture wars," Ohio's small hub towns and cities share many of the same characteristics, problems, and challenges as its eight major cities. This report provides a composite profile of 47 "**Small Hub Towns and Cities**" located in about half of Ohio's 88 counties – communities that are centers of civic, social, or economic life for areas extending beyond their borders.



With a combined population of 1,170,570, broadly distributed across the state, communities included in the study have one or more major institutions that establish or contribute to its "hub" status. These are as follows:

- Seat of county government (34 of 47);
- Presence of a four-year public or private college or university campus (20 of 47);
- Presence of a hospital (35 of 47, three of which have two hospitals).

Because four-year colleges and universities have such a significant presence and influence in their home communities, the data for the **Small Hub Towns and Cities** cluster are further broken-down into three groups, as follows:

- "**Heartland Towns**," including 27 hub villages and cities that have neither a public nor private university (19 have a public community college or branch campus, four

of which have one of each). Their combined population is 764,064 and average population, 28,299;
- "**Public College Towns**," including five cities that are home to public four-year universities. Their combined population is 128,613 and average population, 25,723.
- "**Private College Towns**," including 15 cities that are home to private four-year universities. Their combined population is 277,893 and average population, 18,526.

The composite, or profile, data for **"Small Hub Towns and Cities"** are benchmarked against composite data for two other types of municipalities:

- The eight "**Big Cities**" at the centers of Ohio's major metropolitan areas with a combined population of 2,291,171 (Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Akron, Canton, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown);
- Fifteen "**Suburbs**" which are broadly representative of communities within the metropolitan areas surrounding the eight Big Cities, with a combined population of 336,012 and average (mean) population of 22,401.

Employment, Incomes, and Economic Conditions

- Manufacturing provides 17.5 percent of the jobs in heartland towns and 16.3 percent in private college towns, nearly double the proportion in Ohio's big cities or the nation as a whole.
- The largest source of employment in Ohio, as in the nation, is *Educational Services, Health Care and Social Assistance*. Heartland towns lag other communities in this sector.
- Nearly *three-fifths* of all jobs in public college towns are in the *Education, Health Care and Social Assistance* and *Arts and Entertainment* sectors, a far higher concentration than any other type of community.
- Private college towns have more diverse economies than either heartland or public college towns, closely tracking statewide averages.
- Median annual family earnings in heartland towns are considerably below those for the state as a whole, more closely approximating those of Ohio's big cities than similarly sized college towns and suburbs. At $ 46,860, heartland town median annual family incomes are less than 60 percent of the suburban benchmark communities.
- For the years 2010 – 2014, Medicare and Medicaid insured about one-third of all Ohioans, but in heartland towns, these public programs insured 43.5 percent of the population, a higher proportion than the 38.5 percent in Ohio's eight big cities (this was *prior to* Ohio's Medicaid expansion).
- Employment opportunities in small hub towns and cities depend heavily on public spending, not only in public enterprises like county government and schools, but as a major revenue source for private universities and hospitals. In 2014, U.S. hospitals received over 60 percent of their revenue from Medicare, Medicaid, and other

Average Economic Impact of Publicly Funded Employers on Small Hub Towns & Cities						
	County Governments (n=34)		Hospitals (n=31)		Public Schools (n=47)	
	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean
Estimated Employment	601	693	882	1,017	564	640
Estimated Annual Spending 2014-15	$ 157,838,361	$ 235,803,380	$ 123,127,000	$ 139,676,000	$ 34,123,269	$ 36,676,967
	Public Universities (n=5)		Public Community Colleges/Branch Campuses (n=23)		Private Nonprofit Universities (n=15)	
	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean
Estimated Employment	3,554	3,003	258	306	526	542
Estimated Annual Spending 2014-15	$ 485,422,604	$ 413,085,363	$ 20,044,604	$ 23,028,929	54,701,705	$ 66,880,446

public insurers. While public community colleges and universities are dependent on federal, state, and local governments for most of their revenue, over the past 20 years, federal grants and loans have become increasingly important sources of tuition and fee income for private universities as well.

Social and Health Indicators

- The proportion of the civilian labor force who were employed in small hub town and cities during the first five years of the decade averaged 51.9 percent, lagging the state as a whole (57.7 percent), big cities (55.5 percent), and suburbs 63.4 percent).
- Over 16 percent of working age adults in heartland towns are disabled, a higher proportion than in Ohio's big cities (about 14 percent) and one-third more than the state as a whole.
- Only 15 percent of those age 25 or older in heartland towns have college degrees, compared to about 25 percent in big cities and the state as a whole.
- Heartland town primary and secondary education spending per pupil is significantly less than college towns, big cities, suburbs, or the state.
- Thirty-four percent of children in heartland towns live in poverty, compared to 23 percent statewide. Children in heartland towns are almost four times more likely to live in poverty than suburban children.
- Almost 75 percent of heartland town primary and secondary school students participate in the federal school lunch program, which covers both below- and near-

poverty students from families with incomes up to 185 percent of the poverty level. This exceeds the statewide rate by over 25 percent, and more closely approximates the 92 percent participation rate of Ohio's eight big cities.

- Teenage birth rates in heartland towns are 31 births per thousand to 15 to 19 year olds, higher than big cities, college towns or suburbs, and nearly double the statewide rate.
- While violent crime rates in small hub towns and cities are about the same as the state as a whole and considerably below those of big cities, property crime rates in heartland towns, at 41 per thousand, are nearly as high as rates in big cities (45 per thousand).

State Policy Options

1. Create an Economic Development Fund for Ohio's Small Hub Towns.
2. Conduct a "Blue Ribbon" Review of State – Local Revenue Sharing Programs.
3. Establish an Ohio Youth Employment and Study (YES) Program.
4. Increase state support for teen pregnancy prevention.
5. Develop and sustain a statewide civic capacity building initiative through an Ohio Communities Roundtable.
6. Encourage City-based and Neighborhood-based Social Services.
7. Enact and Implement the Provisions of Substitute House Bill 130 of the 131st General Assembly, Creating a DataOhio Board.

Introduction

Ohio has over 900 villages and cities. About 200 are suburbs, economically integrated with the eight "big cities" that they surround. Most of the others lie outside the orbit of the major metropolitan areas, with identities and local traditions that set them apart. Among these are "hub" communities, which might be a seat of county government, home to a regional hospital or four-year college, or the base of a well-established private company. In one manner or another, each provides a "center of gravity" to an area extending beyond its corporation limits. These small hub towns and cities are the focus of this report.

How are things going in Ohio's small hub towns and cities? This analysis offers and documents an answer, the short version of which is:

- A quiet crisis is mounting in hub towns across the state, with economic conditions and quality-of-life problems increasingly similar to Ohio's eight major cities.
- Notwithstanding socio-economic disparities and tensions between suburbs and their urban centers, there is a productive symbiosis between them. Suburbs contribute substantially to the vitality and civic capacity of the big cities, which in turn offer amenities on a vast scale. Small hub towns lack anything equivalent to the suburban infusion of workers and capital into the major cities. Rather, they are highly dependent on "old economy" manufacturing jobs and relatively large infusions of public dollars.

While it is hoped that the data and discussion that follow offer new perspective and insight for Ohio policy makers and community leaders, the circumstances they describe are hardly new. Since the Great Recession of 2008, the long-standing controversies surrounding income and social inequality have reached fever pitch. In part a reflection of the extreme to which both incomes and wealth have become concentrated, it is also a reflection of rapid economic change and what many perceive to be stagnant or declining prospects. The usual suspects – "the government," the business cycle, the global economy, greedy corporations exporting American jobs, unions demanding unrealistic wages – are daily fodder for pundits, fueling rage on the Left and Right, and anxiety across the political spectrum.

Yet, amidst the familiar chatter, there seems to be an emerging consensus that inequality, poverty, and declining prospects are problems requiring attention to more than the mechanics of the economy. The conservative scholar Charles Murray's 2012 book *Coming Apart,* poignantly documents that these problems transcend race, detailing the growing social, cultural, and spatial gaps between America's White low-income poor and upwardly mobile middle-class.[1] Harvard Professor Robert D. Putnam's 2015 book, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis,* delves into inequality from a different perspective, but like Murray focuses on the importance of family life in shaping the life prospects of the young.[2] Putnam's earlier work, his well-known *Bowling Alone: The*

Collapse and Revival of American Community, shows how declining "social capital," or the personal engagement in a wide variety of civic and social organizations, has adversely affected the quality of life in communities across the country.[3]

The influence of these works has reached beyond academic and public policy circles to the general public, as the realities they analyze have found political expression. Financial hardship is not a problem only for African Americans and Hispanics, but for significant numbers of Whites. Poverty and structural economic decline are not just an issue for big cities, but for small towns. Several recent books, among them Richard O. Davies' 1998 book *Main Street Blues: The Decline of Small Town America,* and collected essays (with Joseph A. Amato and David R. Pichaske), *A Place Called Home: Writings on the Midwestern Small Town,* provide historical and cultural context for this state of affairs. J.D. Vance, writing for *The Atlantic*, summarizes it as follows:[4]

> "These are places where good jobs are impossible to come by. Where people have lost their faith and abandoned the churches of their parents and grandparents. Where the death rates of poor white people go up even as the death rates of all other groups go down. Where too many young people spend their days stoned instead of working and learning."[5]

Historical Background

Ohio was settled by design, although one would be hard-pressed to know it traveling around the state today. Interstate highways carry you past most of the over 900 villages and cities, along with the geographical features that usually explain why they are there. If driving the secondary highways, road signs might narrate your way from one of 1,300 townships to this town or that, or through several otherwise undifferentiated and sprawling suburbs of the eight major metropolitan areas. If you find your way into one of the big cities, the confluence of one-way or radiating streets and avenues, interrupted by snaking interstates, might seem, as the software designers might say, less than intuitive.

It would all be a wonder to Thomas Jefferson, drafting the Ordinance of 1784 to lay down the first principles of organized settlement for the Northwest Territory. And it would be equally such to the authors of the Northwest Ordinance, whose specifications for the extensive township and range plan of frontier settlement was as unprecedented in scope as for its firm application of rationality and order to settlement of the lands.

The township and range system organized more than land sales – it provided a framework for local governments whose jurisdictions aligned with the system of parceling land. Townships and counties became the building blocks of local government, within the borders of which villages and cities could be established. The parameters of local government were determined by the state legislature rather than the constitution. It was not until the constitution was amended in 1912 that local voters

could adopt charters of local self-government for municipal corporations, and 1933 that counties received similar authority.

While the orderly township and range system to this day defines the boundaries of townships and counties, the realities of migration, settlement, economic development and municipal governance more closely followed the physical geography and natural resources found by early generations of settlers. Forests, rich soil, minerals, and waterways were abundantly available for building materials, farming, mining, power, and transportation. As these enterprises were developed, nearly one thousand villages were founded across the state, many of them growing to become cities, small and large. In *Main Street Blues,* Richard O. Davies writes:

> "These communities provided the vital economic and social hub for the surrounding farmland. There were so many scattered across the landscape because each had to be located within the reach of horse-drawn buggies and wagons. Each town provided the necessities: a bank, a weekly newspaper, a general store, perhaps a clothing emporium, a school, a barber, a physician or two, a lawyer to draw up wills and provide assistance to those who entered the county courts, several livery stables, harness makers and blacksmiths, a few taverns, an undertaker, and, of course, several churches."[6]

In this way, the neatly plotted system that so effectively served the purposes of settlement and development along a most Jeffersonian pattern, gradually accreted an over-layer of towns that in turn evolved into today's multi-tiered network of general and special purpose local governments. They add up to over 3,800, fifth among the 50 states, about one-quarter being municipalities and one-fifth public school districts.

This history of settlement and growth, from frontier to the evolution of "hub" towns and cities that are the focus of this report, can be visualized by the maps below, which date from 1818, 1886, and 1945.

Cities and Counties

The quality of life in villages and small cities does not receive attention that is nearly proportional to their collective population or importance. There are several reasons for this.

First, the economies, commerce, and cultural institutions of the major cities overshadow in concentration and scale what may be found in small towns. The same is true of their social and health problems, even where they are proportionally similar. Since the muckrakers of the Progressive era began exposing the corruption and human toll of the industrial revolution, reform initiatives have largely followed the great migrations to America's big cities: social reform has increasingly become equated with urban reform.

Second, as punditry gave way to social science and the rise of such national think tanks as Brookings, the Heritage Foundation, Urban League, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and innumerable others, they have provided a steady and growing stream of analyses and proposals that, whatever their political slant, focus by-and-large on the dynamics of major urban areas. These institutions in turn are dependent upon major corporations, labor unions, and a network of national and global foundations, themselves having deep roots in the country's major urban centers.

At the local level, this urban focus is reinforced in metropolitan areas across the country through the work of community and private foundations. Professionally staffed, and guided by corporate and civic leaders, these institutions usually focus on the metropolitan areas surrounding the central city each calls home. Benefiting from corporate and private wealth, they are able to invest in the health, welfare, and general civic capacity of their home communities, and influence, directly or indirectly, the priorities of state governments.

Attention to quality-of-life issues in villages and small cities pales by comparison. While many themselves have small community foundations, and some of these benefit from generous private support, the combination of their small scale, together with frequent use of targeted corporate- and donor-advised funds, significantly limits their capacity to focus on policies affecting social and health conditions in their home communities. Even those that do are impeded by the problem of scale – there simply is not a critical mass of collaborators from other communities to be effective in the state capital, let alone Washington, D.C.

These two sources of relative inattention to small town quality of life are complemented by institutional arrangements that subtly divert attention from them. Health and social services aimed at improving living conditions are generally the purview of county, not municipal, governments. Under the supervision and oversight of state human service departments (Job and Family Services, Medicaid, Aging, Developmental Disabilities, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Youth Services), counties generally have parallel departments or boards that plan and manage local operations.

The information systems supporting the work of these agencies collect and report data on a countywide basis, reinforcing a customary county-based focus in demographic analyses and federal and state policy-making. (A current example of this may be found in The Center for Community Solutions series of *Health and Human Services County Profiles* covering Ohio's 88 counties.)[7] This county-based human services tradition has its roots in an era when removing the poor, as well as those with mental illness or disabilities, was considered a service to town life. Poorhouses, preventoria, and asylums functioned as shared service arrangements under the auspices of county government.

Conceding that there was, and remains, economy in these arrangements, they do not square with the way most people and businesses relate to their hometowns. There was never a "Rubber County," but there was a "Rubber City," just as the furnaces and mills of the Mahoning Valley were operated by *Youngstown* Sheet and Tube. Ohio's largest employer is not called GlobalHealth Cuyahoga, but The Cleveland Clinic. We identify Proctor and Gamble with Cincinnati and Nationwide with Columbus, not Hamilton or Franklin county. This is as true for small hub towns as the big cities. Whirlpool Corporation has a Findlay, not a Hancock County, division. The Longaberger Company is from Newark, and J.M. Smucker Company is from Orville, notwithstanding their situation in Licking and Wayne counties. And while it might be correctly stated that the Cavs, Crew, Bengals, Reds, Indians, Browns, Rubber Ducks, and Mud Hens all play their home games in counties, who even gives it a thought?

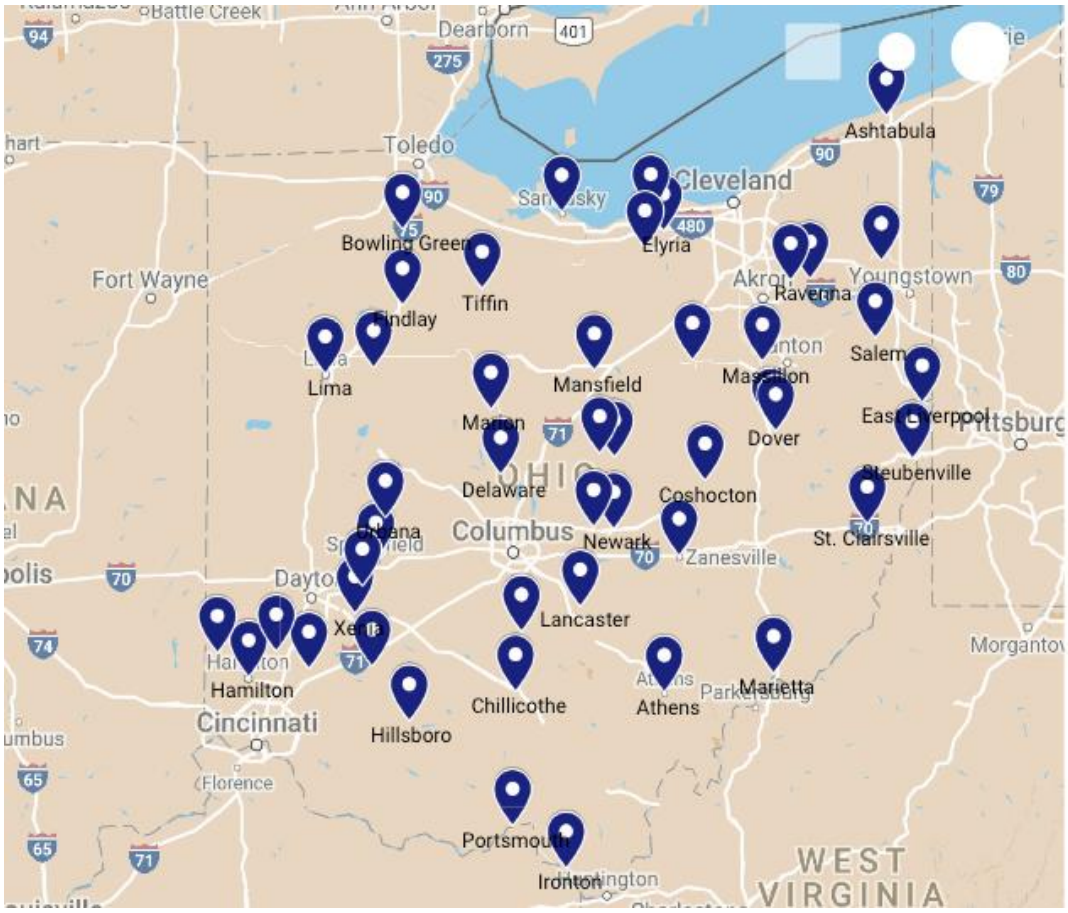
This is a long-standing tradition, stretching far into the past, and one that is sustained daily by the public infrastructure that municipal governments devote to basic services for neighborhoods and private enterprise. Streets, public utilities, public safety, and economic development are generally the purview of municipal governments, not counties. The service areas of public school systems are generally contiguous with their municipal base. Human services generally function at some remove from both municipal government and schools.

This report aims to bring into focus the economic, social and health conditions of small hub towns and cities in Ohio. It does so through a series of economic, social and health indicators for a broadly representative sample of communities, hopefully bridging the perceptual gulf between familiar measures of wellbeing (as usually reported for counties, the state, or the nation) and the communities people call "home."

Creating a profile for these towns allows them to be benchmarked against Ohio's major cities and their suburbs, underscoring the relevance and immediacy of the data. The policy options offered in the final section suggest a few tangible ways of rolling back what must be considered an emerging crisis.

Organization of Data and Terminology

The data presented below provide a composite profile of 47 "**Small Hub Towns and Cities**" located in about half of Ohio's 88 counties – communities that are centers of civic, social, or economic life for areas extending beyond their borders (see *Appendix A*). Distributed across all regions of the state (see map below), and varying in size from about 2,500 (Gambier) to 63,500 (Lorain), their average (mean) population is 24,906, and combined population of just over 1,170,000, or 10 percent of the statewide total.[8]



With a combined population of 1,170,570, broadly distributed across the state, communities included in the study have one or more major institutions that establish or contribute to its "hub" status. These are as follows:

- Seat of county government (34 of 47);
- Presence of a four-year public or private college or university campus (20 of 47); and/or
- Presence of a hospital (35 of 47, three of which have two hospitals).

As discussed below, these institutions, along with public schools, are major employers, attracting significant federal and state financial resources, along with large numbers of non-residents who attend, transact business, or otherwise interact with them. Of the 34

county seats, 26 are home to a hospital, 12 of which also are home to a four-year college or university.

Because four-year colleges and universities have such a significant presence and influence in their home communities, the data for the **Small Hub Towns and Cities** cluster are further broken-down into three groups, as follows:

- "**Heartland Towns**," including 27 hub villages and cities that have neither a public nor private university (19 have a public community college or branch campus, four of which have one of each). Their combined population is 764,064 and average population 28, 299;
- "**Public College Towns**," including five cities that are home to public four-year universities. Their combined population is 128,613 and average population 25,723. (*Note that United States Census data, including the American Community Survey that is the source of much of the data below, include most full-time students in the counts for the communities in which their schools are located*).
- "**Private College Towns**," including 15 cities that are home to private four-year universities. Their combined population is 277,893 and average population 18,526.

The composite, or profile, data for these **"Small Hub Towns and Cities"** are benchmarked against composite data for two other types of municipalities:

- The eight "**Big Cities**," at the centers of Ohio's major metropolitan areas, with a combined population of 2,291,171 (Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Akron, Canton, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown);
- Fifteen "**Suburbs**" which are broadly representative of communities within the metropolitan areas surrounding the eight Big Cities. These have a combined population of 336,012, and average (mean) population of 22,401 (Blue Ash, Boardman Township, Fairlawn, Fairview Park, Gahanna, Green, Hilliard, Huber Heights, Loveland, Norwood, Oakwood [the one near Dayton], Strongsville, Sylvania, University Heights, and Worthington).

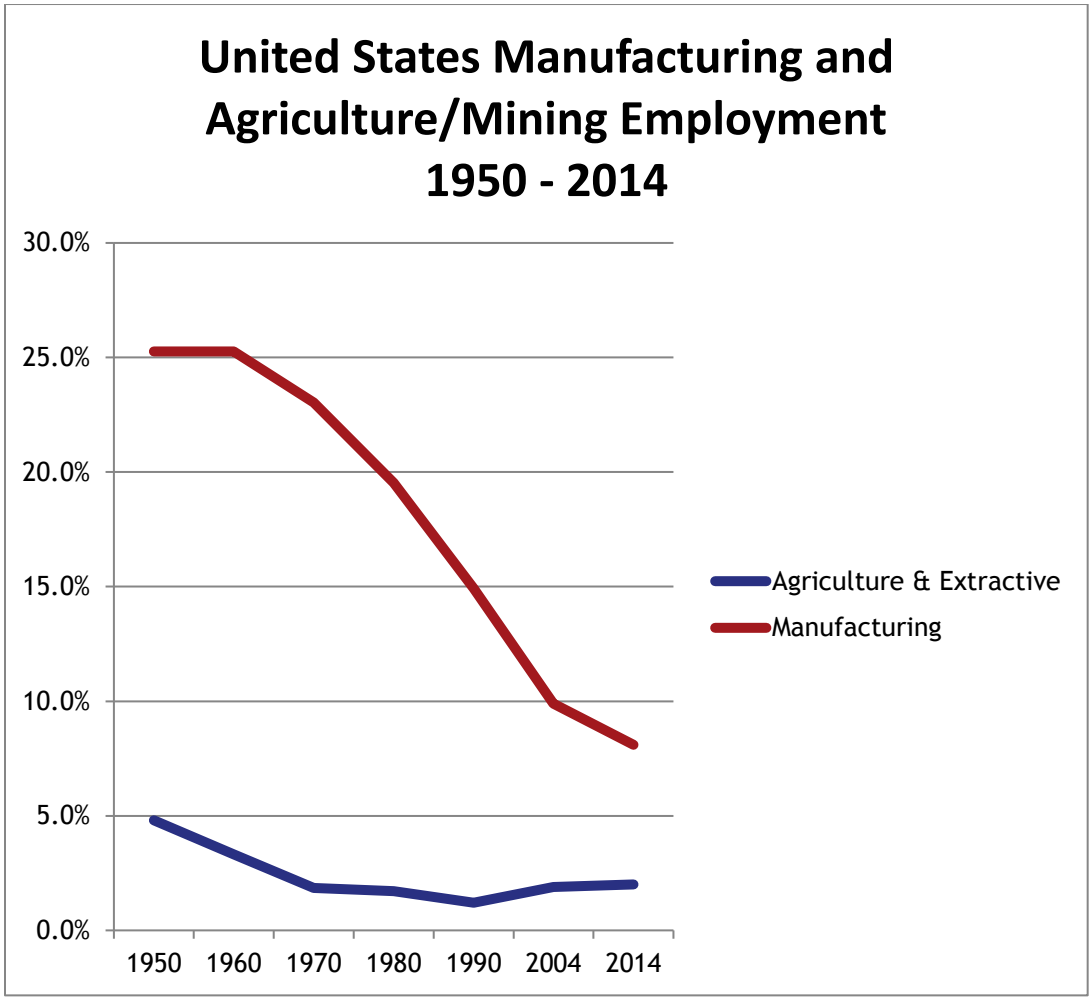
The American Community Survey (ACS) is the source of much of the data presented below. Conducted annually by the U.S. Census Bureau to track population trends, the ACS employs a sampling methodology that is most accurate when applied to large population groupings. In order to reduce the margin of error that might be expected from sampling the smaller communities included in the analysis, the tables and charts that follow use composite data prepared by the Census Bureau for the five years 2010 - 2014. This, together with presenting mean (average) and/or median (mid-point in a range) data for the clusters and groups described above, provide reasonably accurate estimates, if at the loss of some currency.[9] For occasional reference in reviewing the data, *Appendix A and B* provide details for the groupings described above.

Hub Town Employment, Incomes, and Economic Conditions

For most of its 200-plus year history, the economy of Ohio developed and grew around agriculture and manufacturing.

- These sectors today constitute about 17.7 percent of the state's Gross Domestic Product of $583 billion, with manufacturing representing about 4 percent more, and agriculture about one-half percent less, than the nation as a whole.[10]
- Chart 1 illustrates the decline of agriculture and manufacturing as a proportion of total employment.

Chart 1 [11]

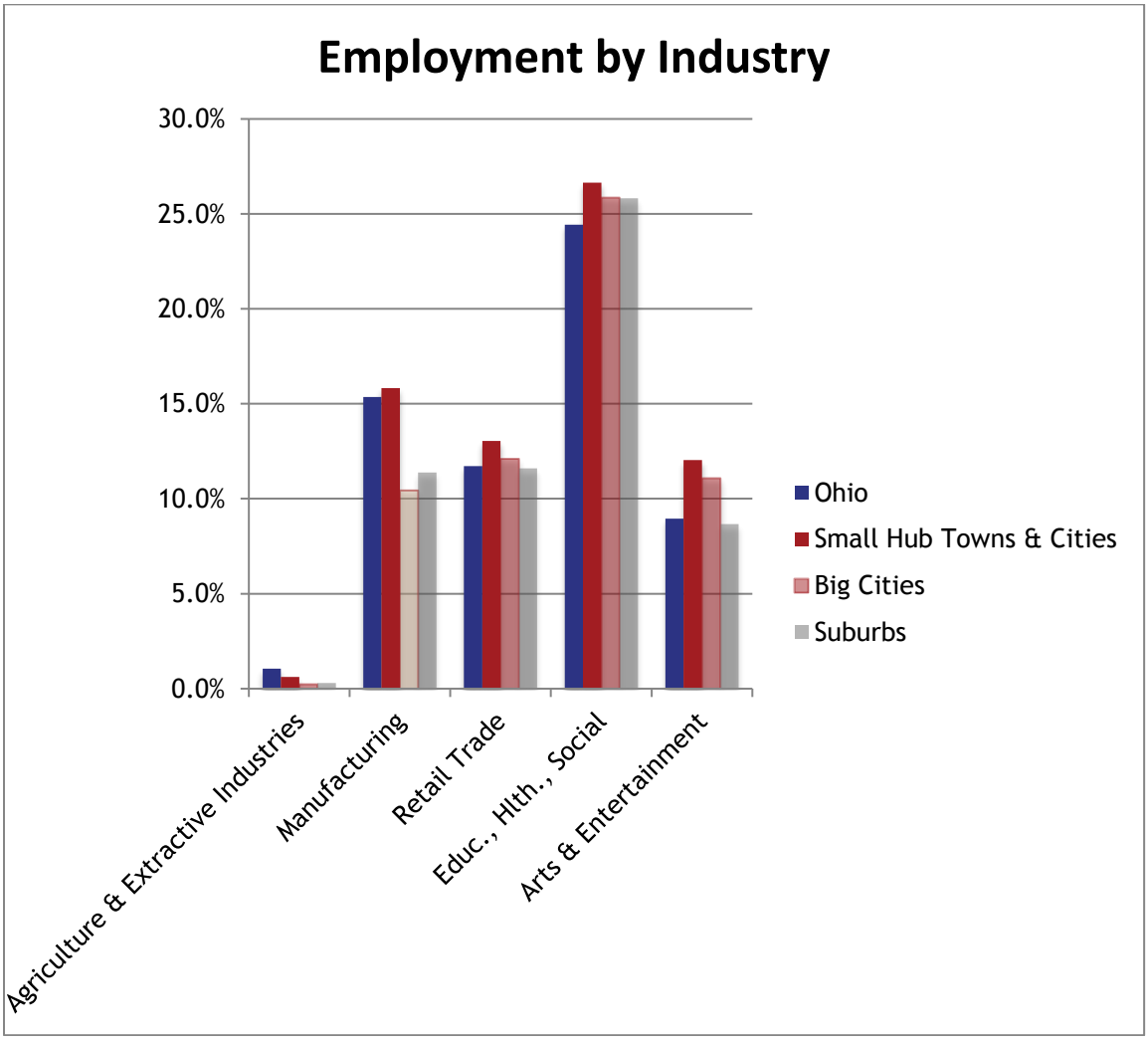


Nationally, this decline has been accompanied by even greater decline in employment in these sectors. However, in Ohio:

- Manufacturing provides 15.4 percent of jobs, exceeding the national average by about 6 percent.

- 15.8 percent of small hub town and city employment is in manufacturing, significantly more than either big cities (10.4 percent) or suburbs (11.4 percent) – see Chart 2.
- Heartland towns and private college towns have an even greater reliance on manufacturing, where this sector provides 17.5 percent and 16.3 percent of the jobs respectively– see Chart 3.

Chart 2 [12]

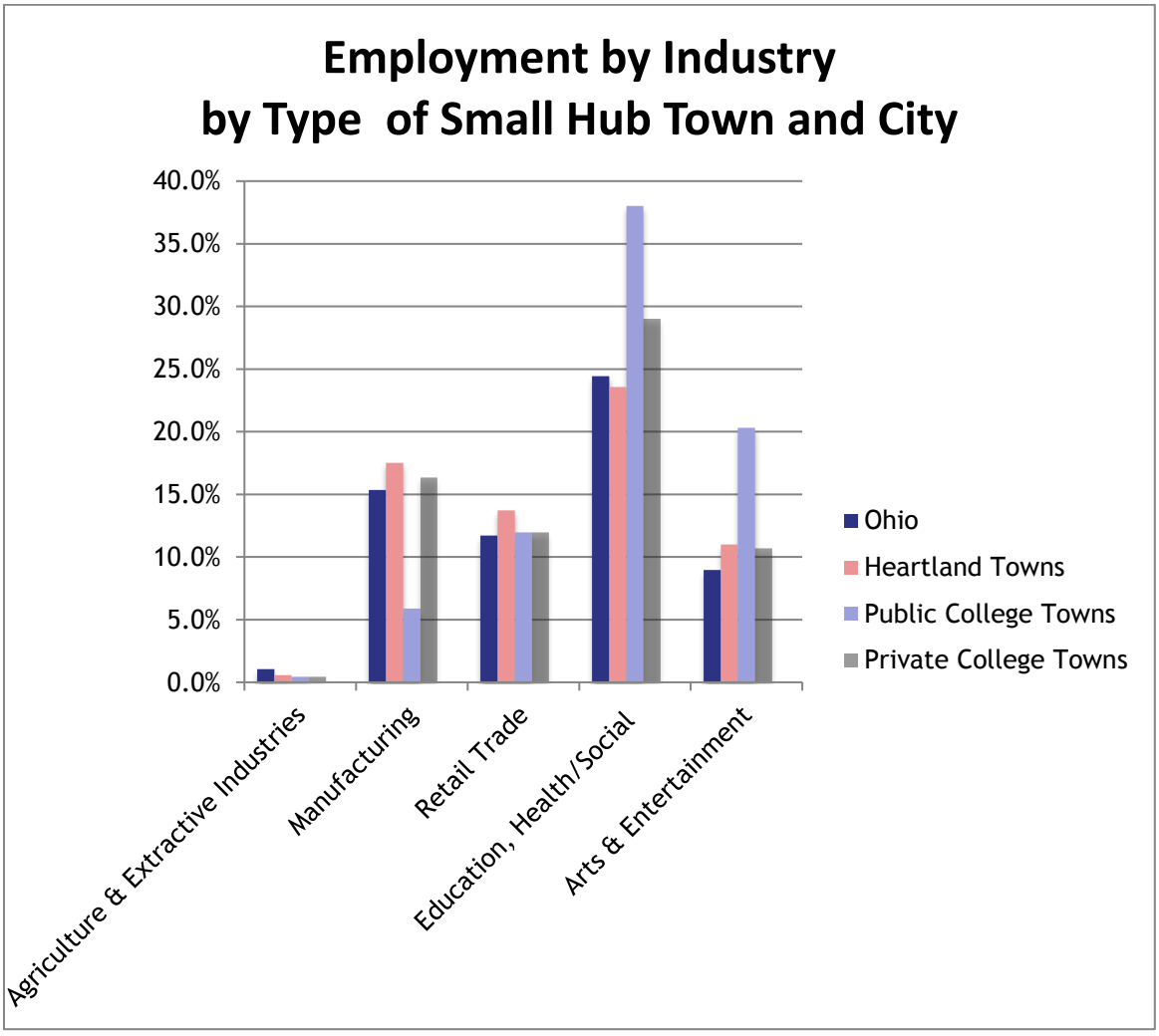


The largest source of employment in Ohio, as in the nation, is *Educational Services, Health Care and Social Assistance*.

- Small hub towns and cities have about the same proportion in this sector as big cities, suburbs and the state as a whole – see Chart 2.
- Heartland towns lag other communities in this sector, while public college towns significantly exceed statewide, big city and suburban averages – see Chart 3.

- Nearly three-fifths of all public college town jobs are in *Education, Health Care and Social Assistance* and *Arts and Entertainment*, a far higher concentration than these represent in other community types – see Chart 3.
- Private college towns have more diverse economies than either heartland or public college towns, closely tracking statewide averages – see Chart 3.

Chart 3 [13]



The economic importance of manufacturing to heartland towns, and education, health and social assistance to college towns, is underscored by the relatively strong annual wages they provide, as shown in Chart 4. Yet, the strength of earnings in these sectors is generally not sufficient to raise incomes in small hub towns and cities to statewide levels – see Chart 5.

Chart 4 [14]

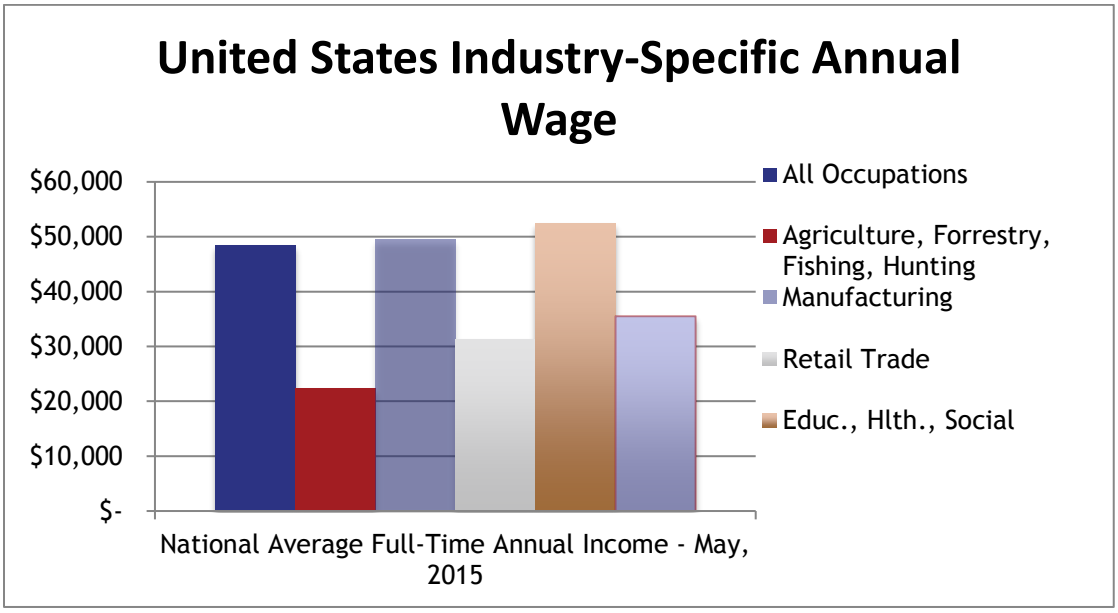
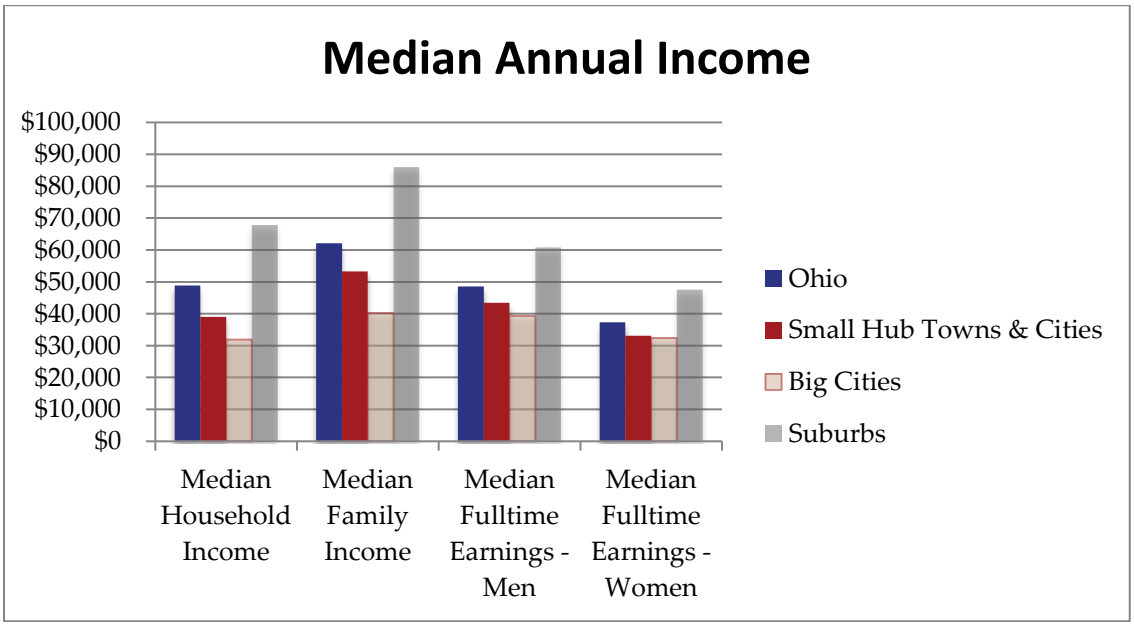


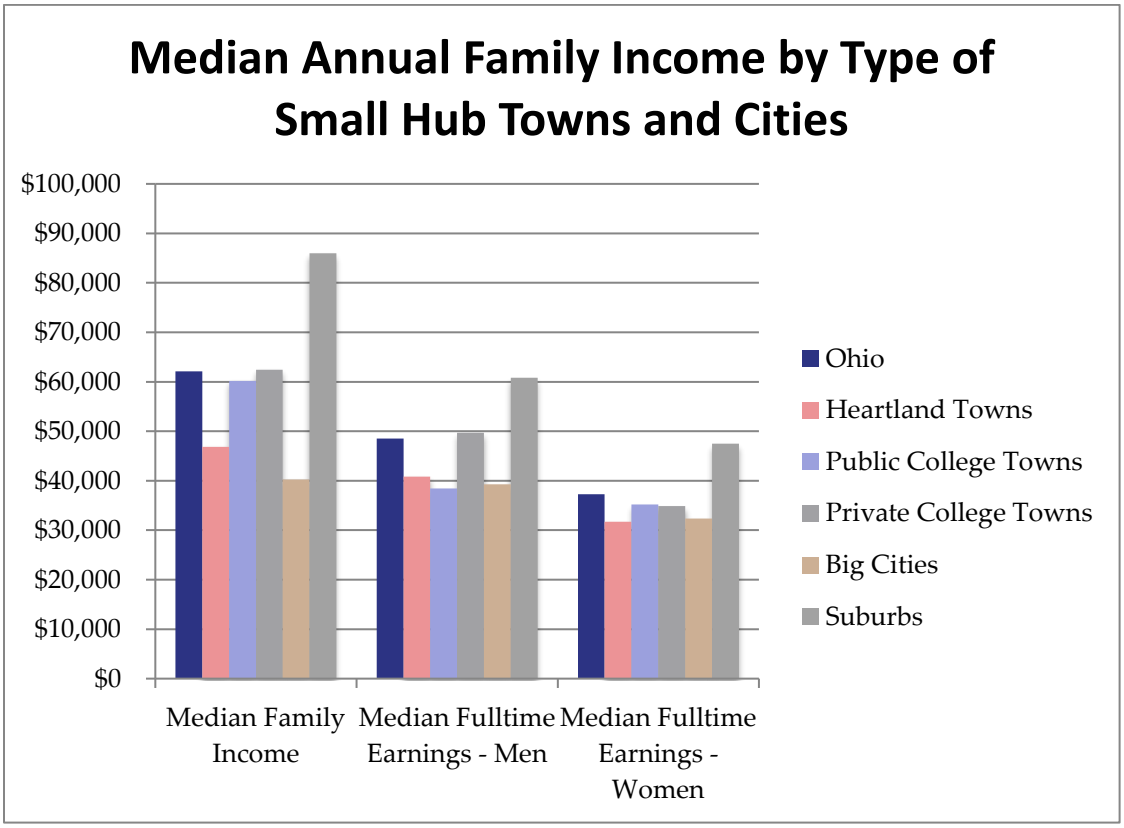
Chart 5 [15]



The ACS differentiates "households" from "families" in reporting information about incomes, by including those living alone and unrelated individuals living together. For public and private college towns, with large numbers of students reporting low or no personal income, household income data significantly depresses median incomes, while also inflating poverty rates. This skewing of the data is removed by focusing on family incomes, as is done in Chart 6.

- When broken-out for the three types of small hub towns and cities, the much lower incomes in heartland towns become apparent – closer to those of Big Cities than to college towns, suburbs, or the state as a whole.
- It is especially noteworthy that median full-time earnings for women in heartland towns ($31,708) are somewhat below those of their counterparts in big cities ($32,360).

Chart 6 [16]



The relatively low median family incomes in small hub towns and cities are confirmed with data regarding health insurance coverage.

- ACS data indicate that reliance on the federal Medicare and Medicaid programs from 2010 through 2014 – before Ohio's Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) – was greater than in the state as a whole and in big cities – see Chart 7.
- In heartland towns, the 43.4 percent depending on Medicare and Medicaid exceeded the rate in big cities by almost 5 percent – see Chart 8.

Chart 7 [17]

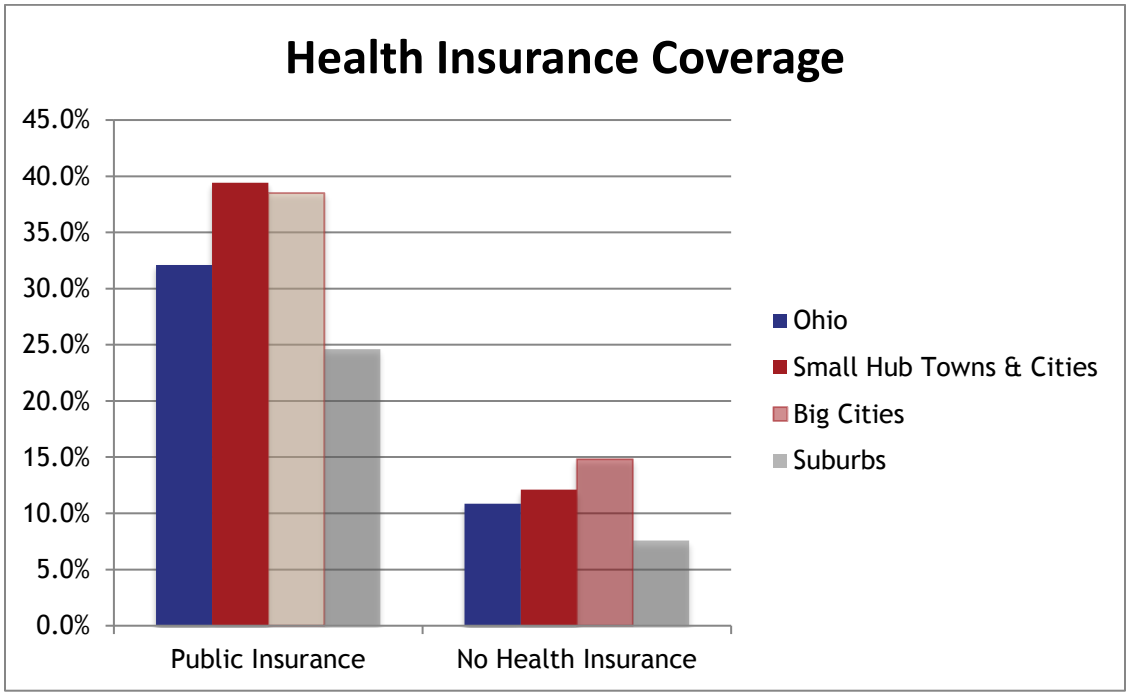
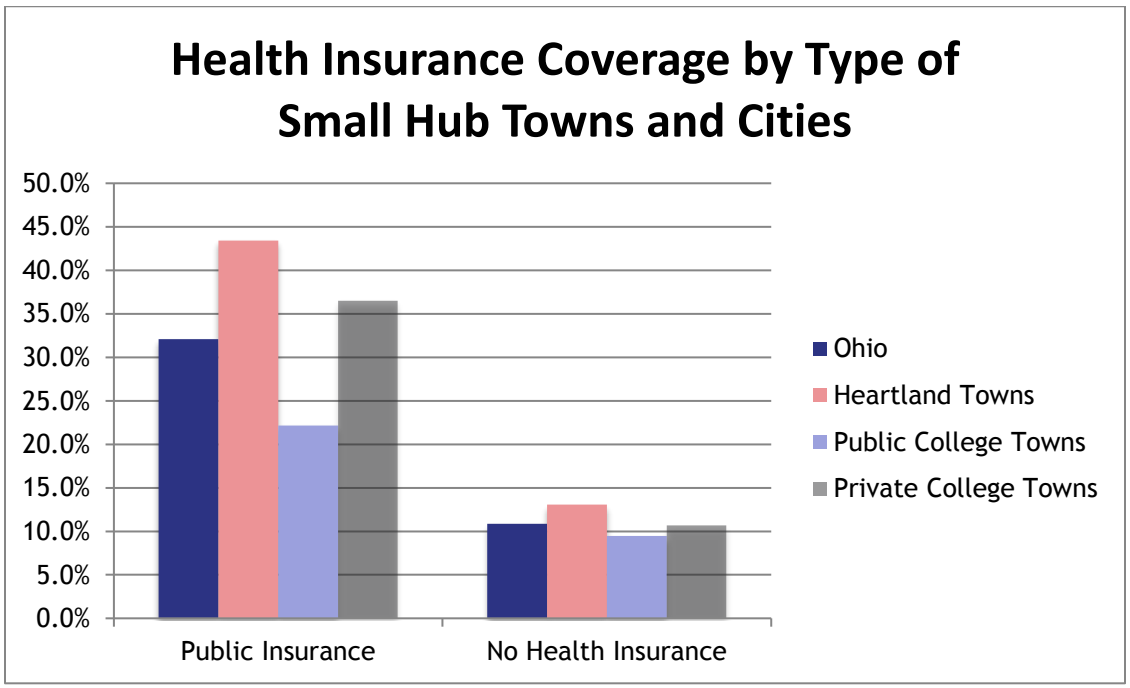


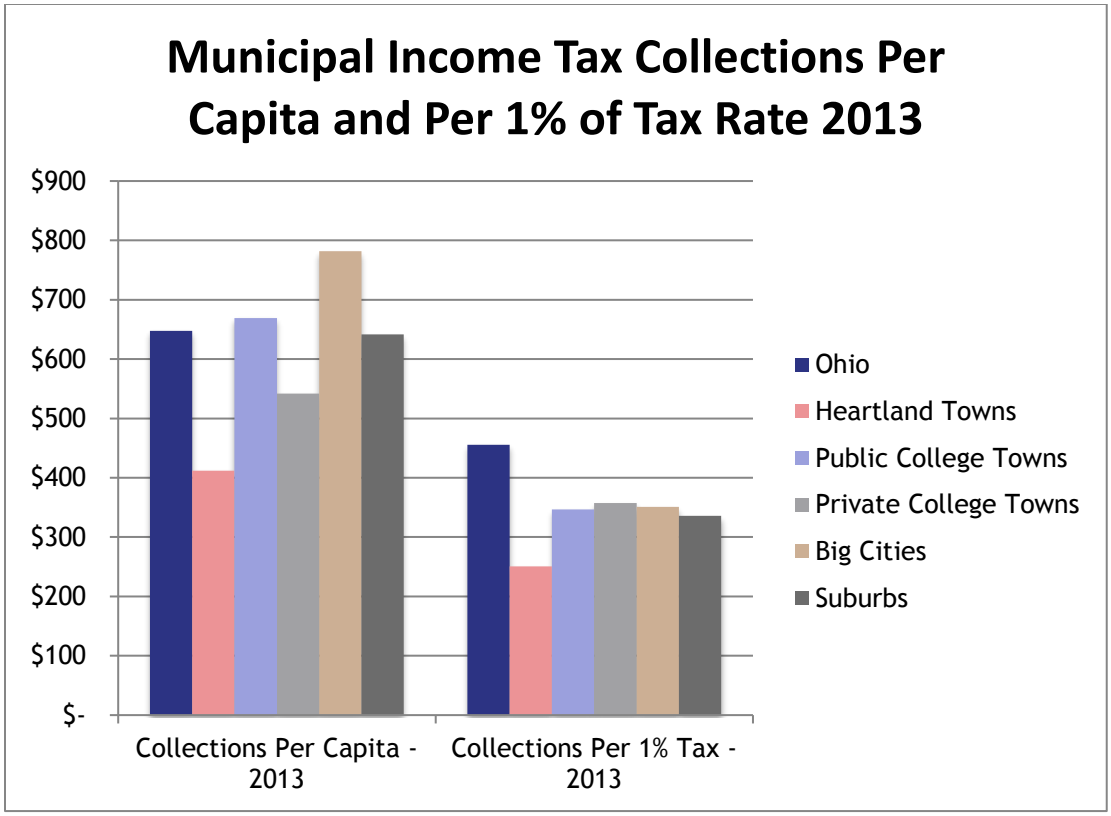
Chart 8 [18]



Municipal income tax data also confirm the lower earnings of heartland towns, while illustrating a related problem adversely affecting the capabilities of their municipal governments.

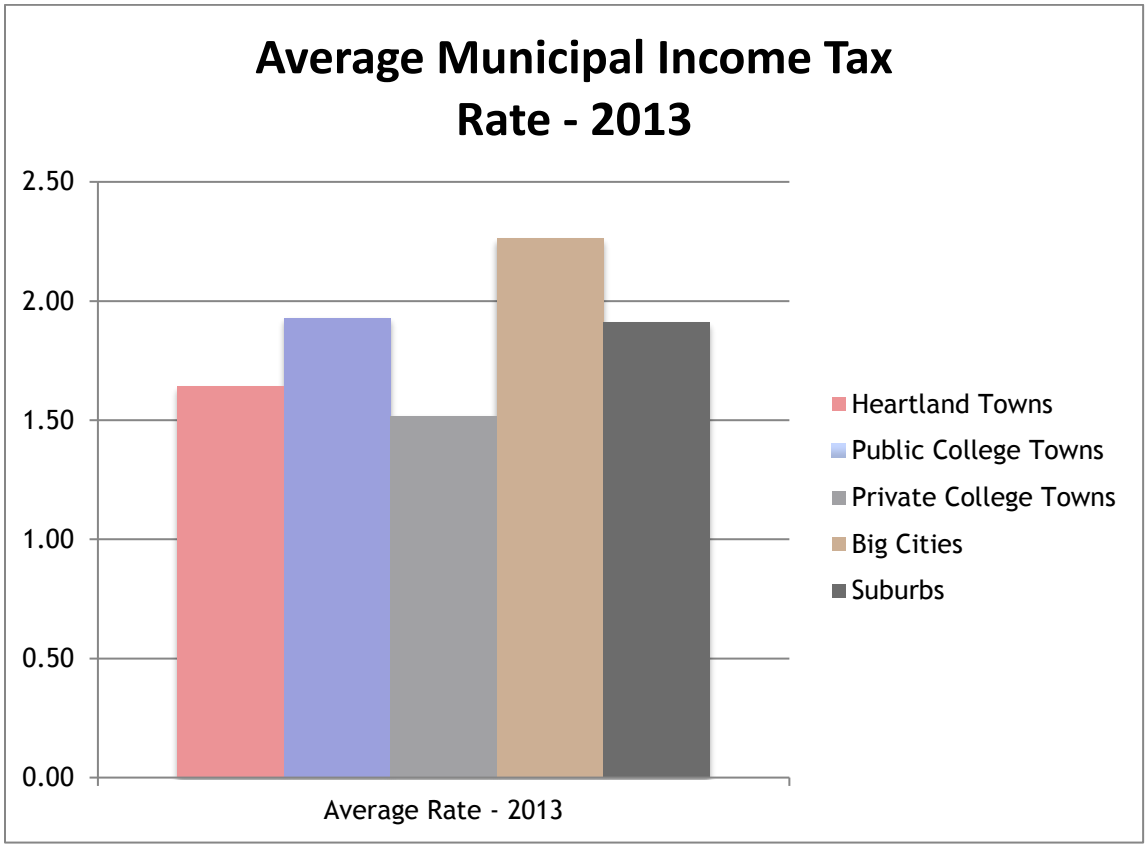
- Heartland towns collect significantly less municipal income tax per capita than college towns, big cities, suburbs, or the state as a whole.
- The large pool of suburban residents working in big cities, who usually pay taxes both where they work and where they live, inflates per capita municipal income tax collection data for big cities. For the purpose of exploring family incomes, this effect may be reduced by computing municipal income tax collections per 1 percent of tax. As shown in Chart 9, heartland town municipal tax collections per 1 percent of tax remain lowest among the various types of municipalities.

Chart 9 [19]



The municipal resources of public college towns face a different problem – the relatively large number of students who consume basic municipal services, but contribute relatively little in the way of local taxes (average 2014 Fall full-time enrollment of about 20,000, ranging from 4,250 at Shawnee State to 29,500 at Kent State). This may be, in part, reflected in the relatively high municipal income tax rates in these communities, particularly as compared to private-college towns, where enrollments are much smaller (average enrollment of about 2,450, ranging from 250 at Antioch in Yellow Springs to 5,200 at Findlay).

Chart 10 [20]



Hub Town Dependence on Public Spending

Employment and economic activity in small hub towns and cities are highly dependent on federal, state, and local government spending. Of those included in this analysis,

- 34 are seats of county government;
- 35 have hospitals serving a larger area;
- 20 have four-year colleges or universities (five public, 15 private nonprofit);
- all 47 have a public school system roughly contiguous with the municipal boundaries.

Table 1 estimates the average number of employees and annual spending by these institutions (note that because comparable data are not available for all hospitals and branch college campuses, the sample sizes for various categories are adjusted to take this into account).

Table 1 [21]

Average Economic Impact of Publicly Funded Employers on Small Hub Towns & Cities						
	County Governments (n=34)		Hospitals (n=31)		Public Schools (n=47)	
	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean
Civilian Labor Force > Age 16 of Host Hub Towns & Cities	10,644	12,518	11,180	12,562	10,003	16,256
Estimated Employment	601	693	882	1,017	564	640
Estimated Annual Spending 2014-15	$ 157,838,361	$ 235,803,380	$ 123,127,000	$ 139,676,000	$ 34,123,269	$ 36,676,967
	Public Universities (n=5)		Public Community Colleges/Branch Campuses (n=23)		Private Nonprofit Universities (n=15)	
	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean
Civilian Labor Force > Age 16 of Host Hub Towns & Cities	11,600	13,091	10,386	13,446	5,830	8,920
Estimated Employment	3,554	3,003	258	306	526	542
Estimated Annual Spending 2014-15	$ 485,422,604	$ 413,085,363	$ 20,044,604	$ 23,028,929	54,701,705	$ 66,880,446

The contributions of the federal, state, and local governments to employment and spending by these institutions require some elaboration. While employment in county governments, public schools, public community colleges and universities are all in the public sector, those of the hospitals and private universities are not. And while most of the spending by county governments and public schools is supported by tax revenue, substantial amounts of spending by hospitals and institutions of higher education are derived from private insurance, in the case of hospitals, and tuition, fees, enterprise revenue, donations, and investments in the case of higher education institutions.

Nonetheless, federal, state, and local public spending are essential to these private nonprofit institutions.

- In the case of hospitals, over 60 percent of revenue derives from Medicare, Medicaid, and other public programs.

Table 2 [22]

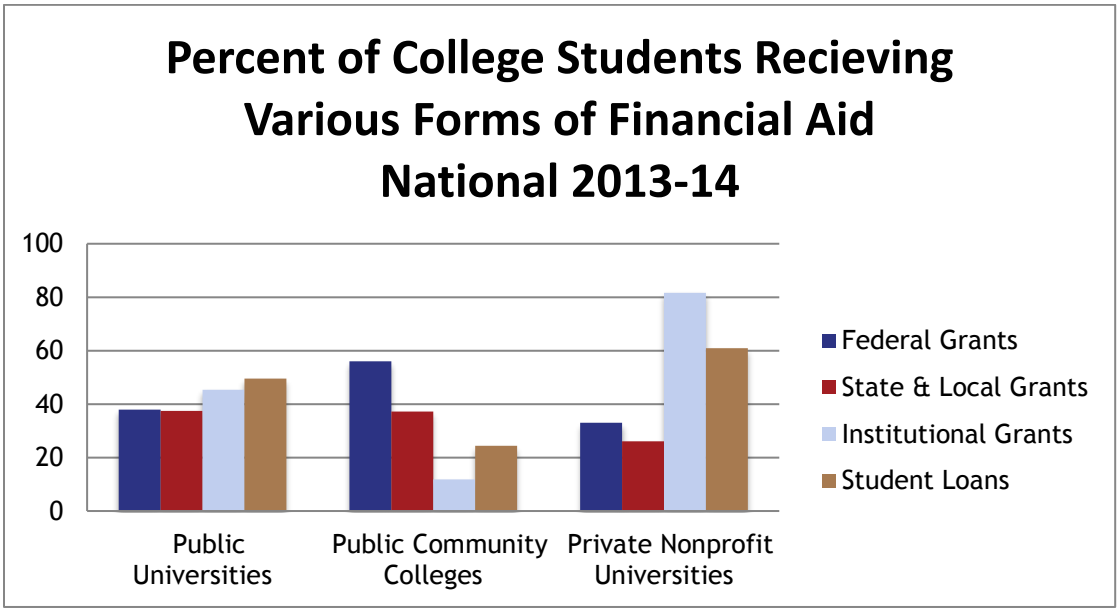
	Sources of U.S. Hospital Revenue				
	Medicare	Medicaid	Other Gov't.	Private Insurance	Self Pay
PERCENT OF HOSPITAL PATIENT REVENUE - 2014	37.9%	18.20%	5.80%	35.10%	3.10%

- Public community colleges receive most of their revenue from federal (23 percent), state (29 percent) and local (19 percent) government subsidies, and just 29 percent from all other sources.
- Public universities receive about one-third, and private universities about one-tenth, of their revenue from direct federal and state government subsidies (for detail on national revenue profiles for colleges and universities, see Appendix C, Charts A – D).

Substantial in themselves, direct public subsidies to colleges and universities are supplemented by another significant form of public financial support - the share covered by grants and federally backed student loans that are accounted as institutional "tuition and fees."

- The vast majority of college students receive some form of financial aid.
- Over the past 20 years, student loans have become an increasingly large source of higher education funding. Nationally, accumulated student debt for higher education now totals over $1.1 trillion, the vast majority of which is owed to the federal government; outstanding student loans today account for over 45 percent of all federally owned assets.
- As shown in Chart 15, half of the nation's public university students, and 60 percent of private university students, incur debt. In Ohio, the federal share averages 85 percent at public, and 77 percent at private, universities.[23]
- For graduates of Ohio's colleges and universities in 2014, 67 percent graduated with debt (11th highest among the states) averaging $29,350 (12th highest among the states).

Chart 11 [24]



To sum up, the economic foundation for jobs in Ohio's small hub towns and cities depends to a significant extent on manufacturing and public spending. Manufacturing is especially important to heartland towns, providing on average over 17 percent of the jobs, nearly double the proportion in Ohio's big cities. Public college towns, which depend on myriad forms of federal and state financial support, are the least diversified. Private college towns generally have more diversified local economies; nonetheless, public spending in them remains significant through county governments, public education, health care, and higher education subsidies.

Labor Force Participation, Older Adults, and People With Disabilities

The relatively low earnings and family incomes of small hub towns and cities are reflected in social and health problems at levels commonly associated with big cities. The data presented in this section, most of which are from the ACS for 2010 – 2014, compare their scope and magnitude to big cities, the sampling of suburbs, and the state overall, followed by breakdowns comparing and contrasting heartland towns, public college towns, and private college towns.

For the first five years of the decade, the proportion of small hub town and city residents in the civilian labor force who were employed, 51.9 percent, lagged the state as a whole (57.7 percent), big cities (55.5 percent), and suburbs 63.4 percent) (see Charts 12 and 13). The proportion of small hub town and city residents outside the labor force, at over 40 percent, was higher that the statewide, big city, and suburban averages. And unemployment, averaging 6.9 percent in small hub towns and cities, was greater than the statewide and suburban averages, if not as high as big cities.

Chart 12 [25]

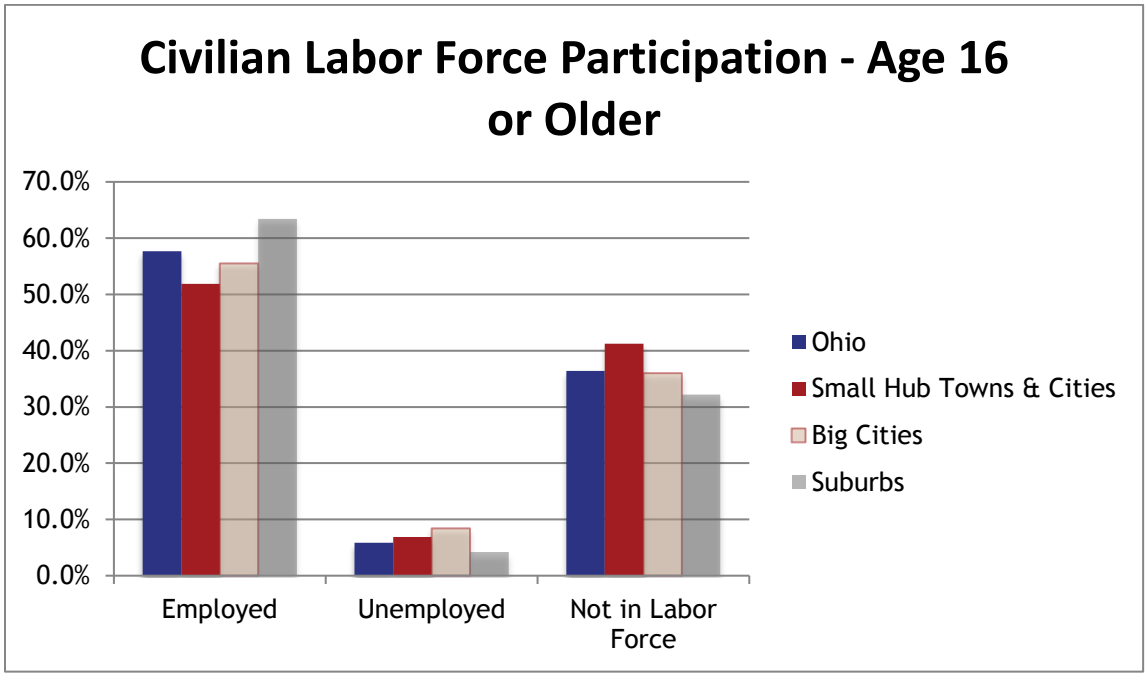
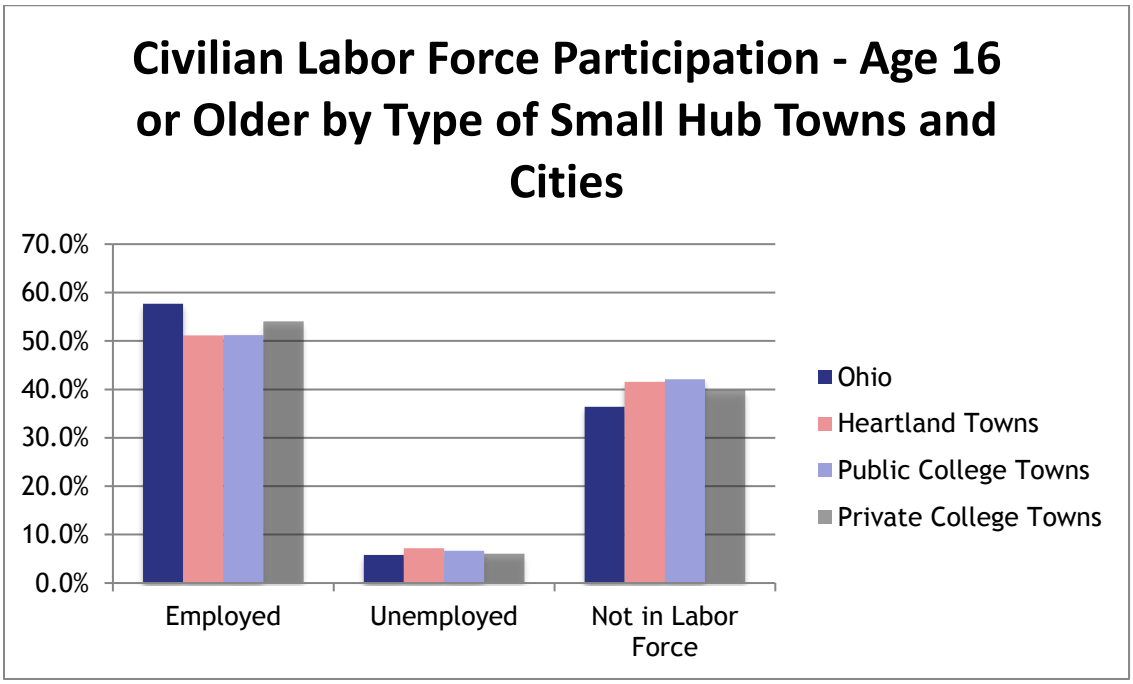


Chart 13 [26]

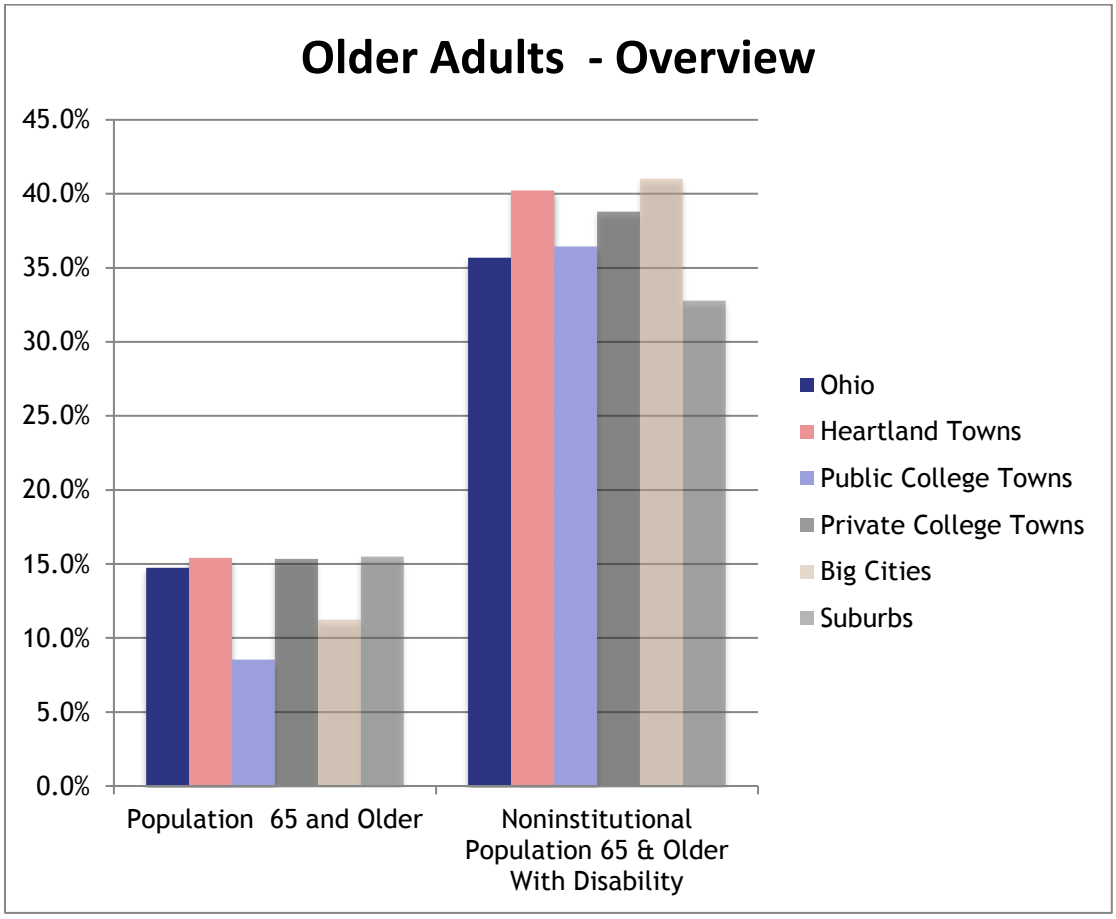


Because the ACS definition of "civilian labor force" includes only those who are employed or unemployed but actively seeking employment, the relatively large number of students in public and private college towns inflates estimates of those outside the

labor force.[27] Yet, the proportion of those outside of the labor force in heartland towns appears to be about the same as for college towns.

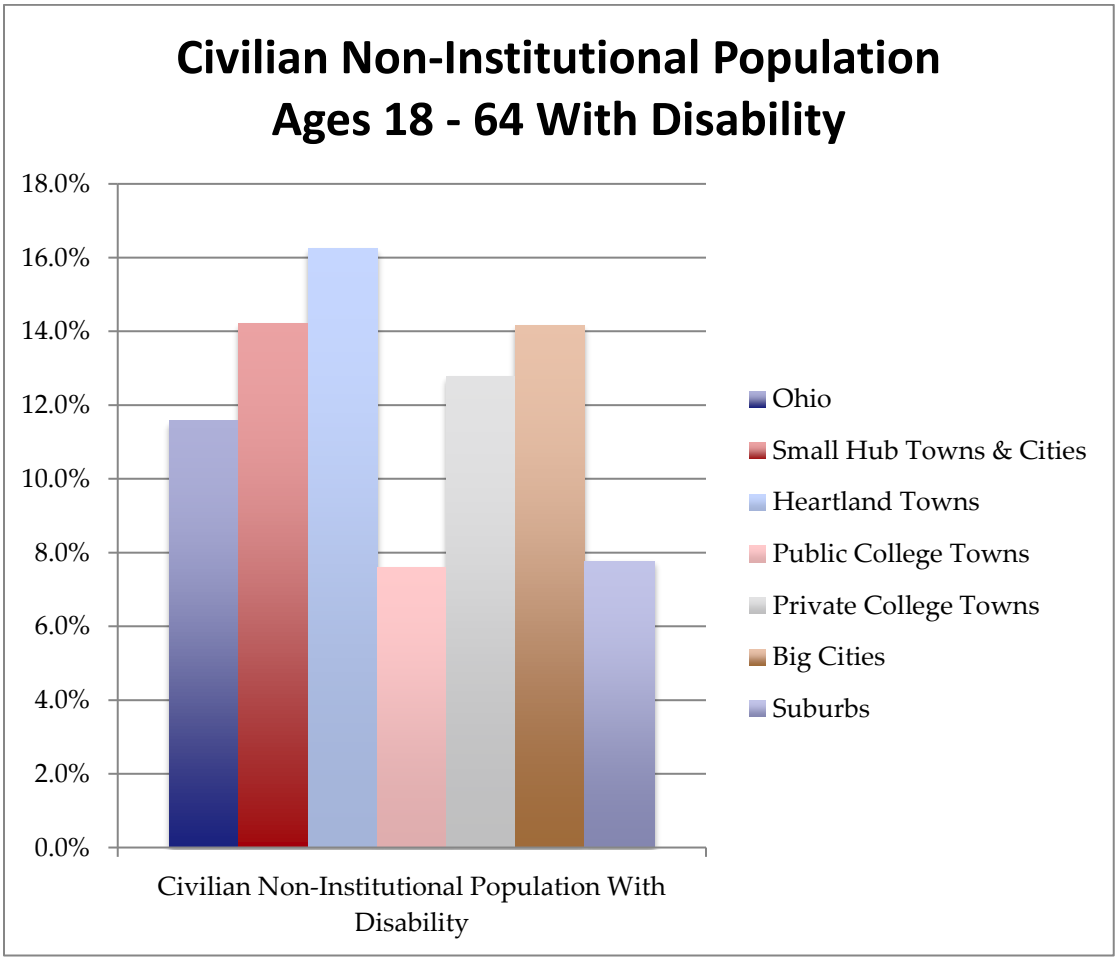
- One possible explanation might be that there is a higher proportion of older adults in heartland towns, but the senior population in heartland towns, while a greater proportion than in public college towns, is about the same as private college towns and not much more than the state as a whole – see Chart 14.

Chart 14 [28]



- A more likely explanation may be found in the proportion of working-age adults age 18 to 64, who report they are disabled – see Chart 15. While working age disability rates in small hub towns and cities exceed the statewide, big city, and suburban averages, heartland towns have the highest rate of working-age disability at 16.3 percent, almost half-again as high as the statewide rate.

Chart 15 [29]

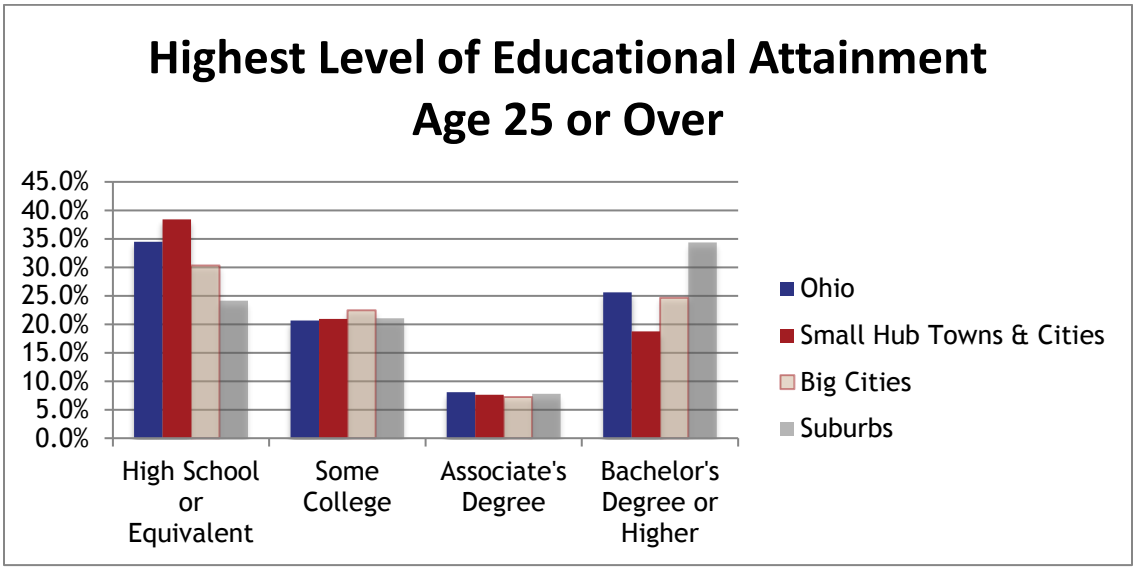


- It is noteworthy from the data in Charts 14 and 15 that the higher proportion of people with disabilities continues beyond working age into older adulthood. About 40 percent of small hub town and city older adults living outside of institutional environments report being disabled, about 4 percent higher than the state as a whole.

Educational Attainment and Public Investments on Education

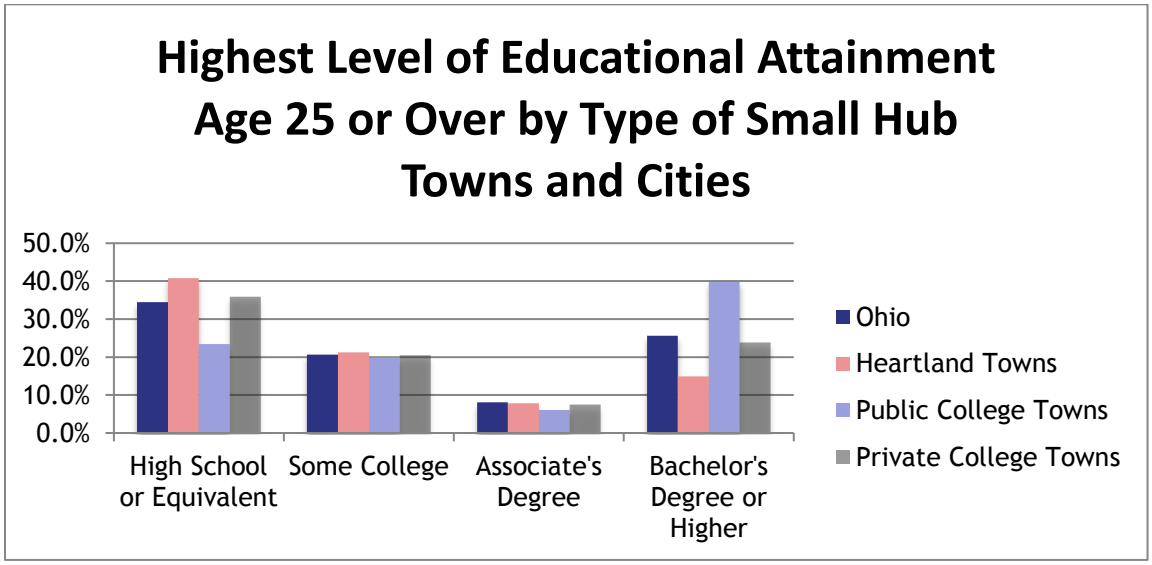
The long and continuing tradition of reliance on agriculture, manufacturing, and other blue-collar employment in small hub towns and cities is reflected in educational attainment and school system data. For decades, much attention, policy making, and public spending has attended the differences in educational attainment, and attitudes toward education, between big cities and suburb. A larger gulf in educational attainment exists between small hub towns and cities compared to big cities, suburbs, or the state as a whole – see Chart 16.

Chart 16 [30]



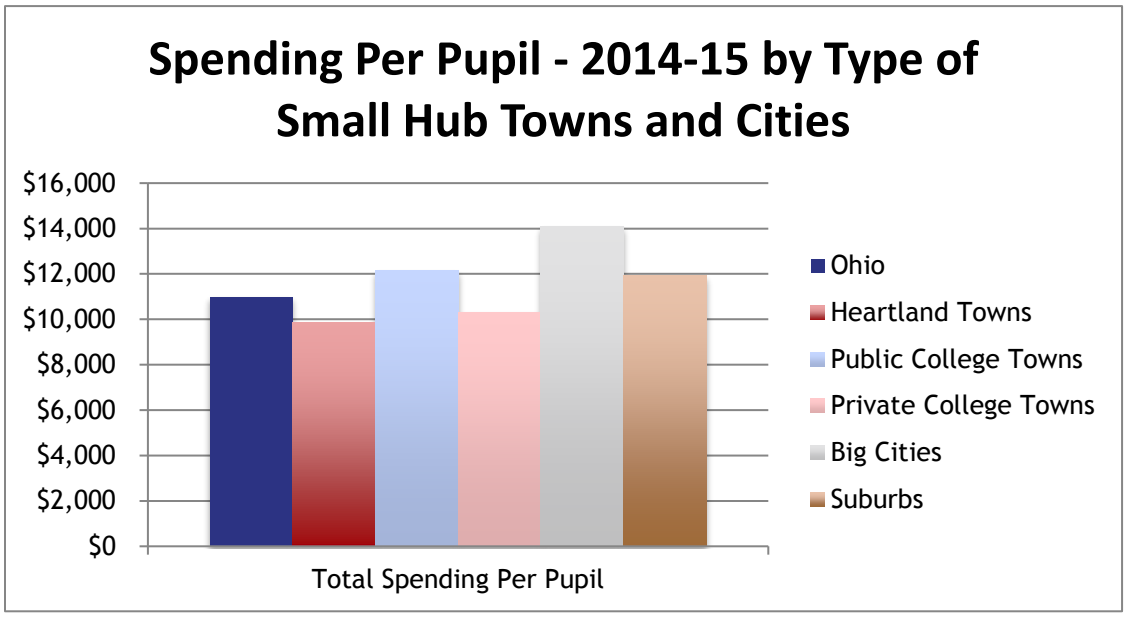
When data for public and private college towns are separated from heartland towns, the educational attainment gulf for the latter takes on even larger proportions. As shown in Chart 17, the proportion of college graduates in heartland towns trails the state as a whole by 10 percent.

Chart 17 [31]



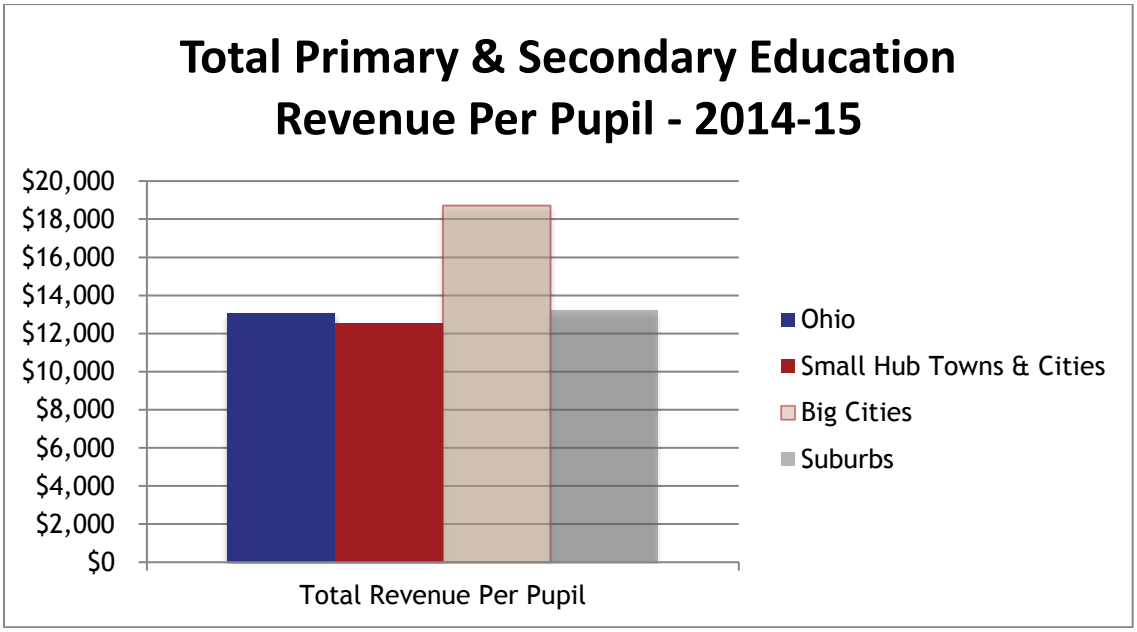
These demographics are in part reflective of public spending on primary and secondary education. Per pupil spending in heartland towns and private college towns is notably lower compared to the state as a whole, public college towns, big cities, and suburbs – see Chart 18.

Chart 18 [32]



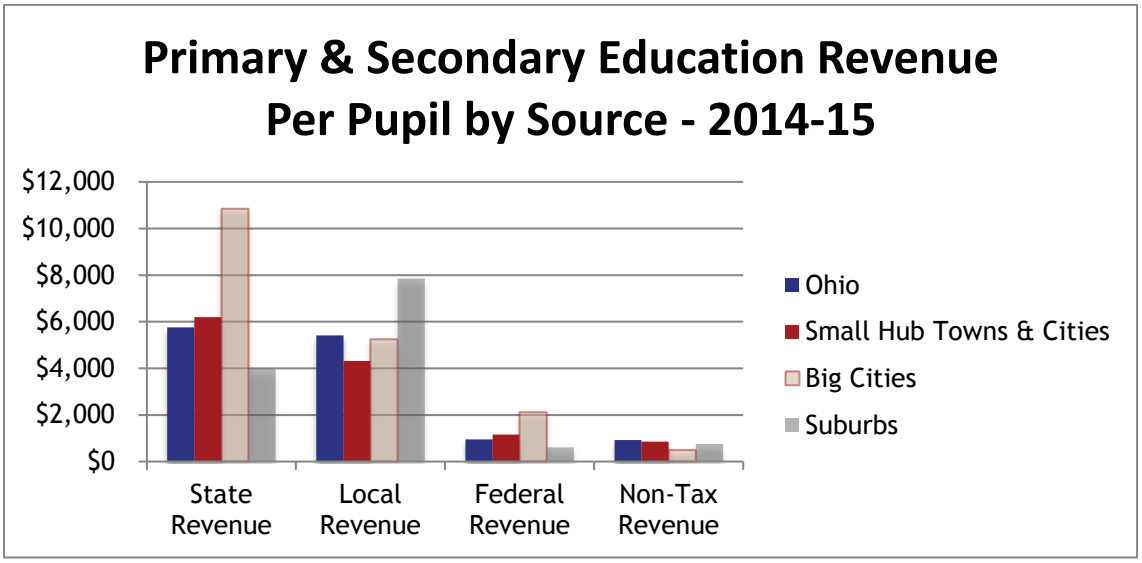
School district revenue reports, which include funds not reported in operating expenditures, reflect the same trends among community types as expenditures, as shown in Chart 19.

Chart 19 [33]



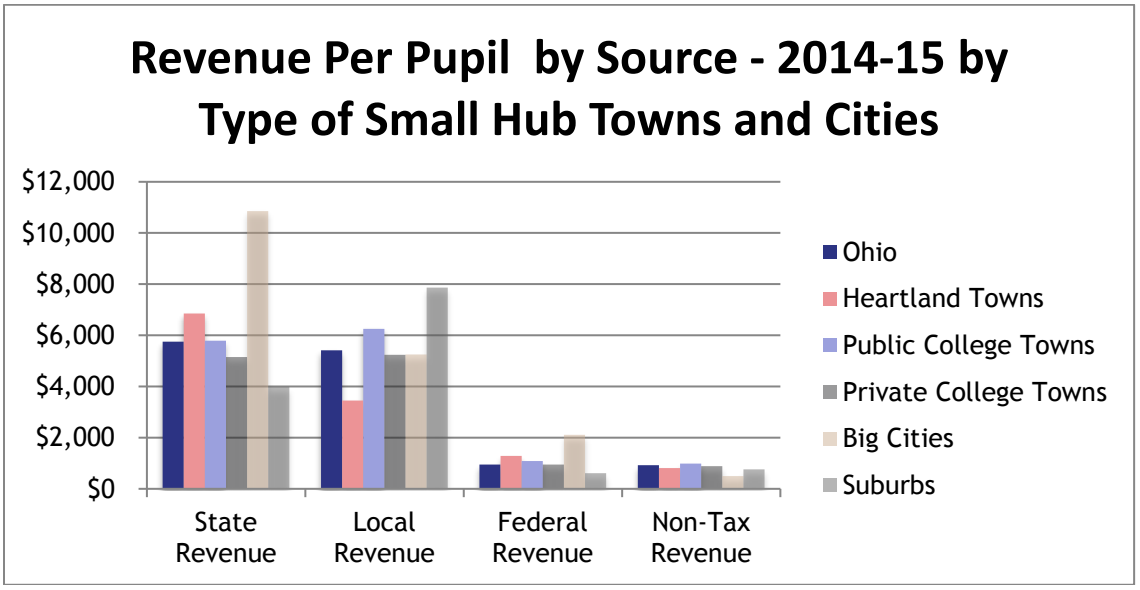
Extending the comparison to the source of funding, notably different patterns emerge, showing substantially lower local revenue for small hub towns and cities – see Chart 20.

Chart 20 [34]



Further breaking down the data to show separate averages for heartland towns, public college towns, and private college towns, heartland towns are shown to raise a substantially smaller portion of their revenue from local sources – see Chart 21.

Chart 21 [35]



It is noteworthy that the State of Ohio contributes more to heartland town school revenue than most other communities, although at $ 6,850 per pupil, it is one-third less state aid to big city school districts.

There is a large and complex body of research validating the roles of education in personal fulfillment, career opportunities, social cohesion, and economic growth. But

higher levels of educational attainment alone do not necessarily contribute to economic growth. As one international study summarizes,

> "The level of cognitive skills of a nation's students has a large effect on its subsequent economic growth rate. Increasing the average number of years of schooling attained by the labor force boosts the economy only when increased levels of school attainment also boost cognitive skills. In other words, it is not enough simply to spend more time in school; something has to be learned there."[36]

Even so, there is a strong association between levels of educational attainment and both unemployment and earning potential, as indicated in Charts 22 and 23.

Chart 22[37]

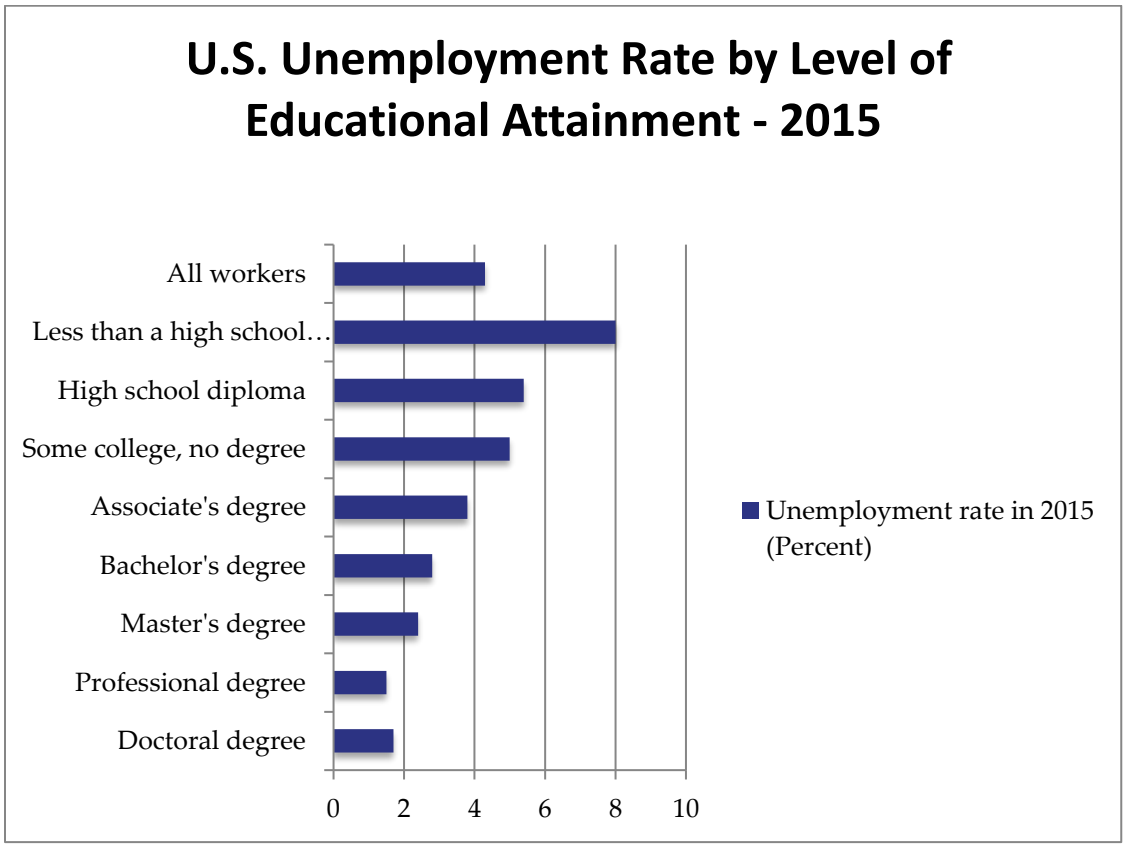
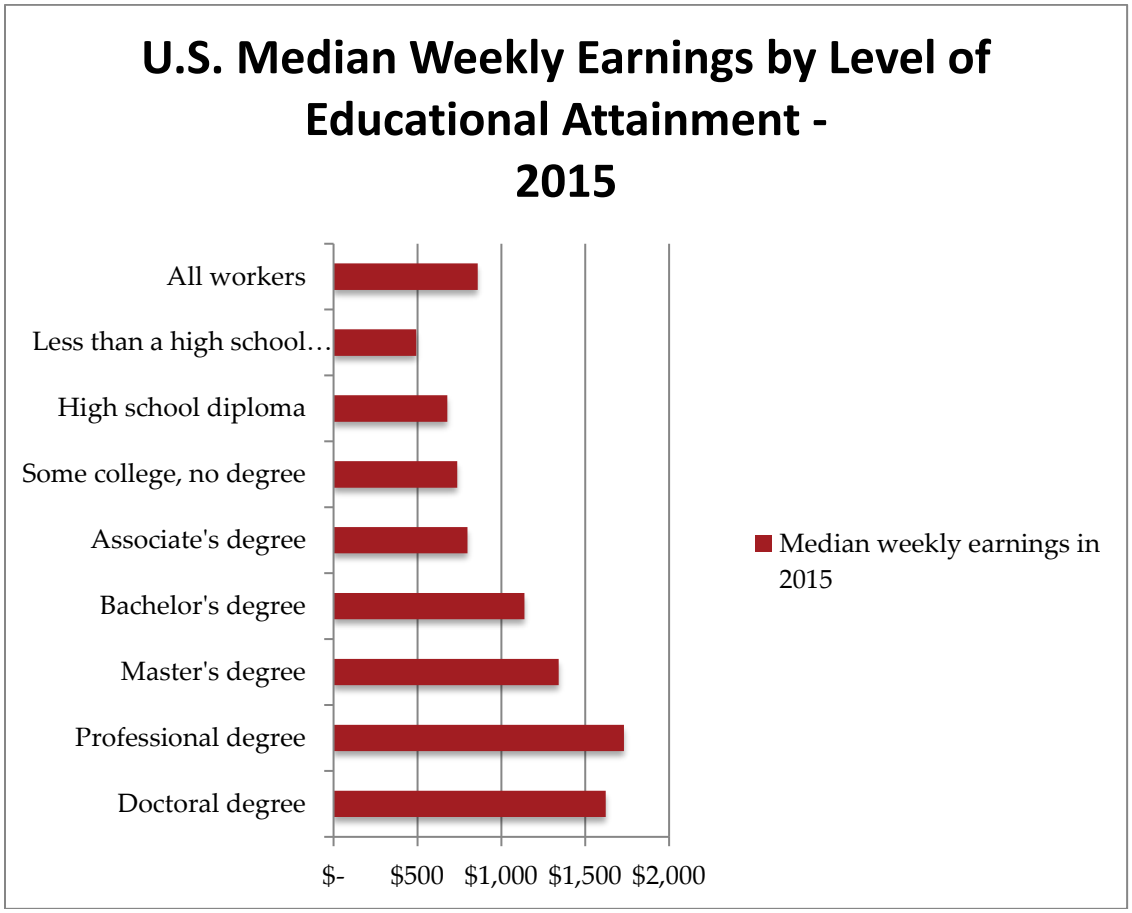


Chart 23[38]



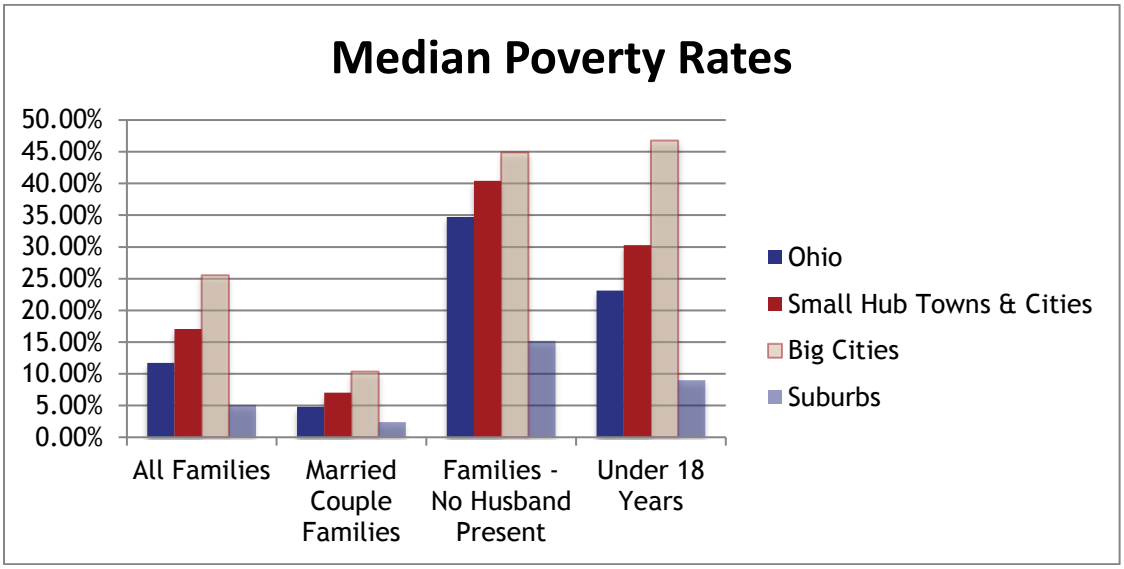
Poverty, Housing, Health, Safety and Crime

Higher levels of spending on education do not necessarily correlate with improved educational outcomes. If they did, simply viewing the data above, Ohio's big city primary and secondary schools would be the best in the state, and by almost any measure, they are far from that.[39]

Other factors contribute significantly to poor educational outcomes, among them poverty, housing, safety, crime and poor health. By these measures, Ohio's small hub towns and cities are doing poorly relative to the state as a whole, and more closely resemble big cities than suburban communities of similar size.

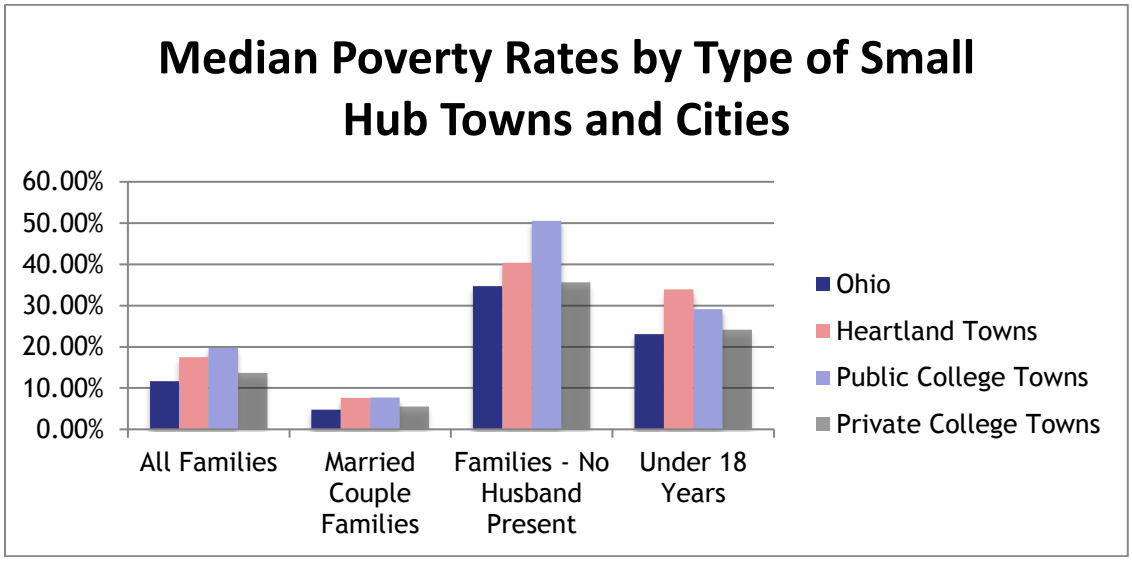
- This pattern may be seen in median poverty rates for families, and for children less than 18 years of age – see Chart 24.
- The 34 percent heartland town childhood poverty rate exceeds the statewide rate by over 10 percent – see Chart 25.

Chart 24 [40]



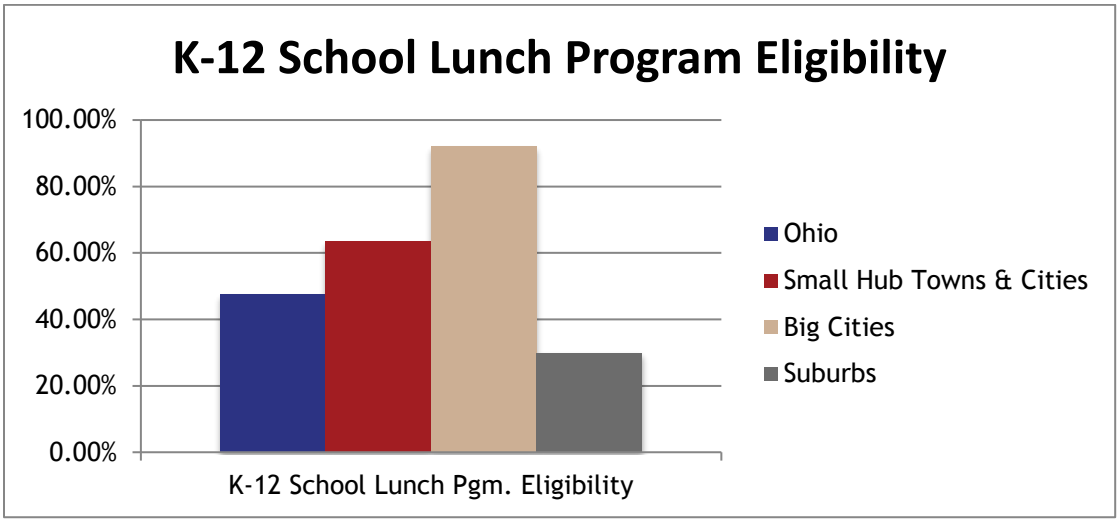
- Poverty rates for families with both parents present are a fraction of those where no husband is present. In public college towns, fully half of families with no husband present have incomes below the poverty level.

Chart 25 [41]



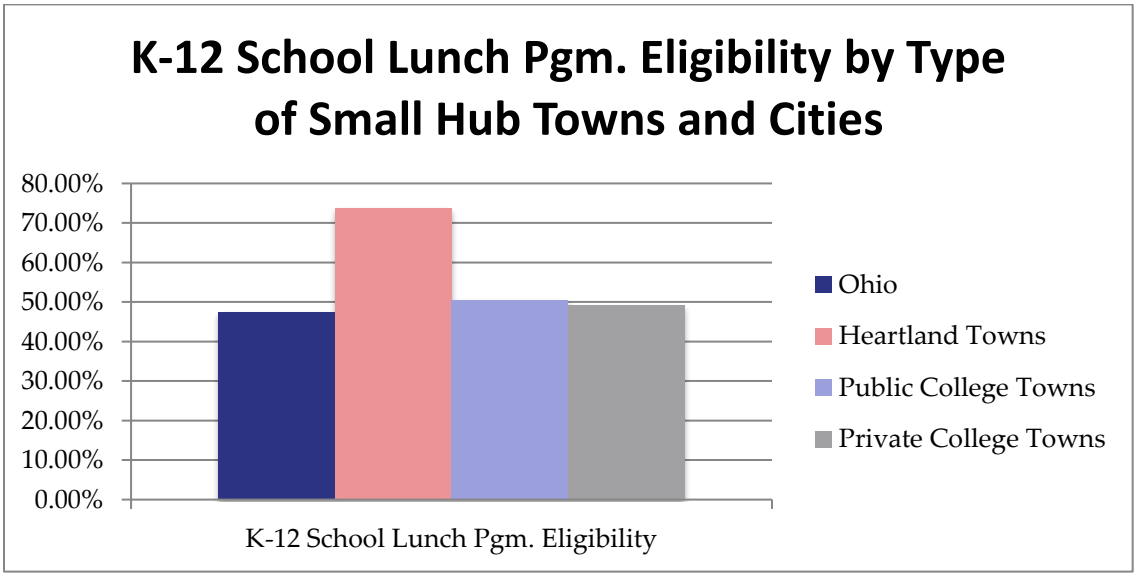
To what extent does the problem of low incomes for families with school age children extend to those living near the poverty level? Median income data presented above offer some insight, but a more precise measure is found in eligibility data on the federal School Lunch Program, which goes to children from families with incomes up to 185 percent of the poverty level – see Chart 26.

Chart 26[42]



Over 60 percent of families with primary and secondary school students in small hub towns and cities participate in the program – one-quarter more than the statewide rate and double the rate in the suburbs. Further breaking down the estimates, nearly three-quarters (73.8 percent) of the children in heartland towns participate in the School Lunch Program – see Chart 27.

Chart 27 [43]



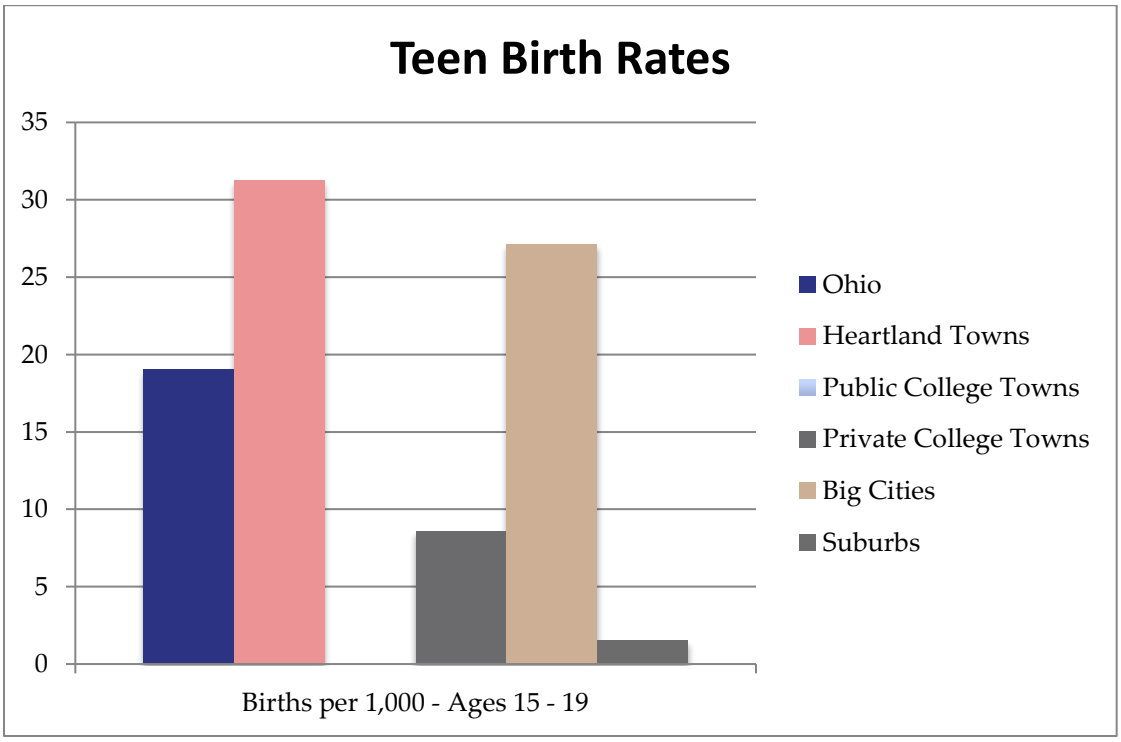
The childhood poverty and near-poverty rates in heartland towns are especially troubling for the future of these communities. A brief review data for problems frequently associated with childhood poverty is suggestive of some of the implications. Among myriad summaries of these, the American Psychological Association (APA) advises that childhood poverty:

- is linked with negative conditions such as substandard housing, homelessness, inadequate nutrition and food insecurity, inadequate child care, lack of access to health care, unsafe neighborhoods, and under resourced schools which adversely impact our nation's children;
- has a particularly adverse effect on the academic outcomes of children, especially during early childhood;
- is associated with a wide range of physical health problems, including poor nutrition, chronic conditions such as asthma, anemia and pneumonia, and risky behaviors, including early sexual activity.[44]

These are confirmed by health, housing data, and crime data below.

- At 31 births per 1,000, teen birthrates in heartland towns exceed those of the state as a whole (19), public college towns (0), private college towns (9), big cities (27), and suburbs (2) – see Chart 28.

Chart 28 [45]



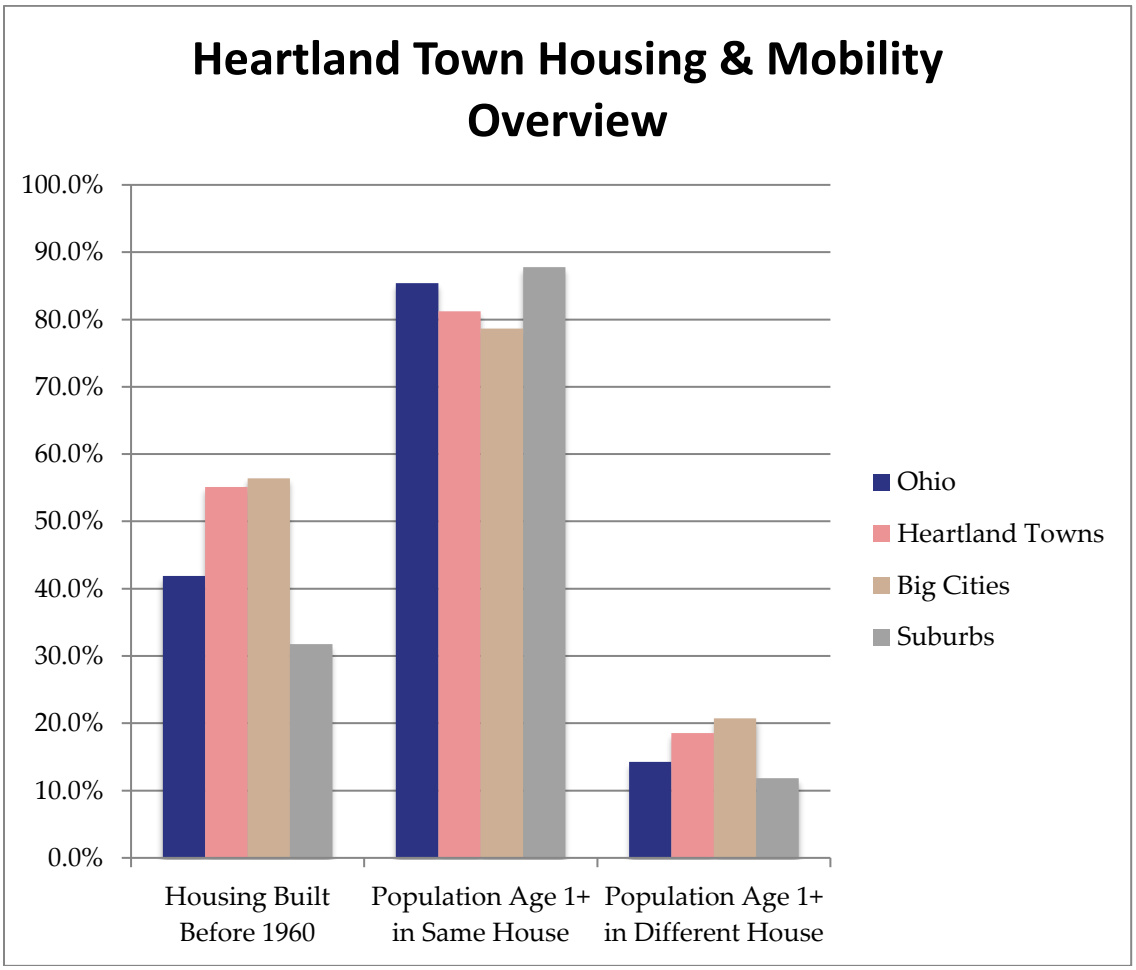
- Housing conditions in heartland towns are closer to those of big cities, with most housing (55.1 percent) built before 1960 – see Chart 29.

- Inadequate or deferred maintenance of older housing stock, more likely where lower incomes are prevalent, leaves unabated such well-known threats to health as exposure to lead from peeling paint and old plumbing. The effects include

higher risk for infectious disease, chronic disease, injuries, and mental health problems.[46]

Besides physical condition, housing mobility – moving from one place to another – adversely affects primary and secondary educational performance. In 2009, the Fordham Foundation commissioned a unique analysis of the impact of mobility on school performance for four of Ohio's major metropolitan areas, and a considerable part of their adjacent smaller towns. Among its major findings: "Persistently mobile students do less well in school than their non-moving peers...frequent school movers face a general downward trend in average test scores and passage rates."[47]

Chart 29 [48]

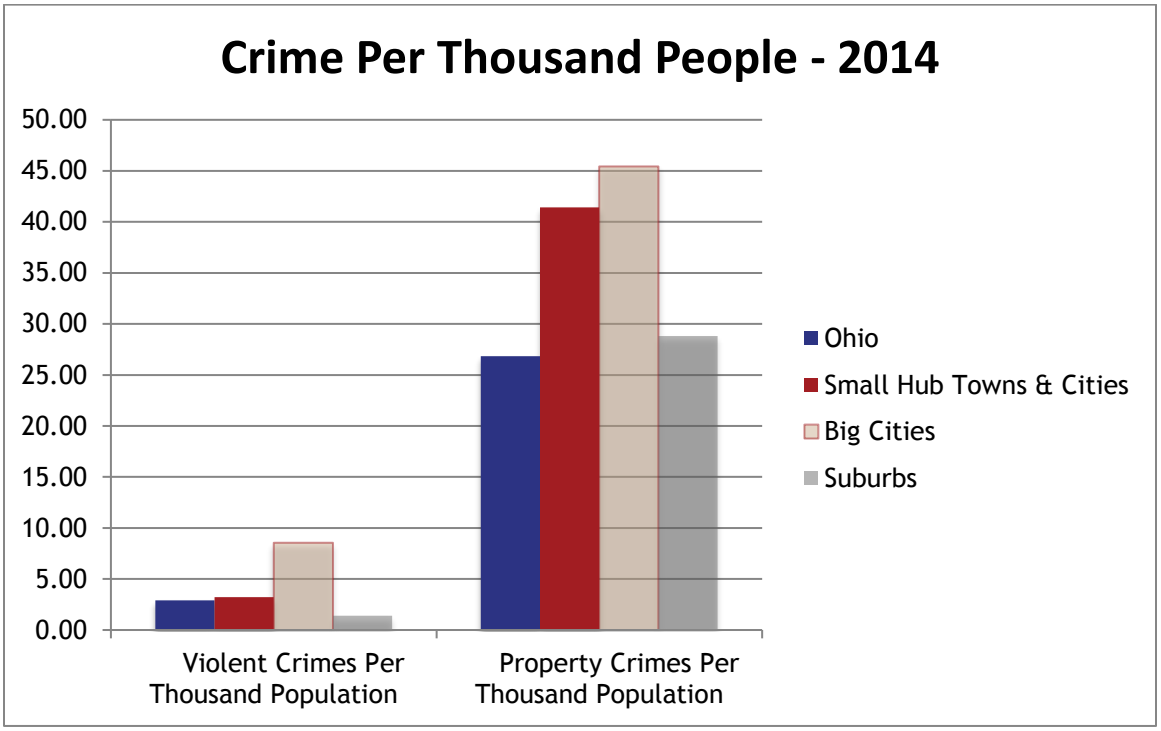


As indicated in Chart 29, a relatively high proportion of people in heartland towns reported to the ACS living in a different house than the year before. This in itself does not necessarily correlate with "churning," the problem the Fordham study associated with the loss of continuity in education. But given the many other similarities in the demographic profiles of heartland towns and Ohio's big cities, it is sufficiently suggestive to warrant notice and further analysis.

Finally, indicators of violent and property crimes reveal contrasting profiles.

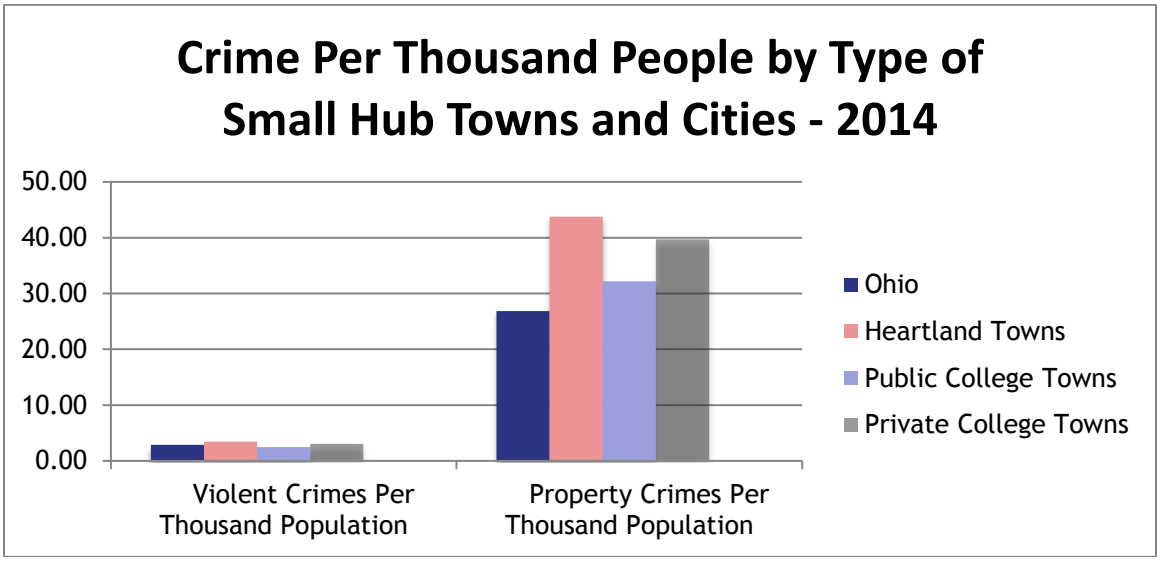
- Violent crime rates in small hub towns and cities, at 3.23 per thousand people, are similar to the state as a whole at 2.90 per thousand. While a little over double the rate of suburbs, they are significantly below rates in big cities (8.54 per thousand) – see Chart 30.
- However, as shown in the same chart, the rate of property crime in small hub towns and cities is considerably higher – over 41 per thousand, or about one-third greater than for the state as a whole, and very close to the 45 per thousand rate in big cities.

Chart 30 [49]



- Among the different types of small hub towns and cities, violent crime rates are similar to statewide data, but property crime rates in heartland towns are considerably higher – see Chart 31.

Chart 31 [50]



Options for Community Leaders and Policy Makers

It is famously said of the economy "a rising tide floats all boats." But for most small hub towns and cities, especially the heartland towns, rising tides in a global economy might appear as likely to wash water over the bow. Increasingly, these communities are experiencing economic, social, and health problems at levels usually associated with the big inner cities, and have proportionally fewer resources to address them.

The options presented below are statewide initiatives aimed at empowering local governments and community leaders. There are several premises on which they are based.

- *First, local action is essential to addressing the economic, health, and social problems of small towns and cities.* Obvious as this might be, there are strong trends that collectively, and persistently, send a message that acting locally just does not matter. Daily – indeed, hourly – punditry about the global economy affirms what people experience directly in their hometowns, from declining or disappearing employment opportunities, to the ubiquitous presence of super stores and globally franchised chains. The decline of local newspapers has created a local information void, while the national media's 24/7 news cycle focuses unceasingly on national politics, Wall Street, global warming, and global terror - all beyond the reach of average citizens.[51] Lacking resources for civic engagement that are so plentiful in metropolitan areas (see discussion of civic capacity on pp. 9 – 10 above), it is small wonder that a sense of powerlessness and lost hope besets many communities.

- *Second, federal and state initiatives can make critically important contributions, but must be designed to facilitate and support local action*. Although top-down public

approaches to strengthening or rebuilding communities simply will not work, this is not to say that federal and state roles are not important to local communities. Only the federal government can provide the various forms of Social Security that today help meet the basic needs of over 40 percent of all Americans– old age and disability pensions, unemployment compensation, health care for lower-income families and older adults. Those dollars flow through local economies, just as do employment earnings. Similarly, state government can generate large financial resources for economic development and job creation that are beyond the means of small – or sometimes even large – cities.

- *Third, there is no formula for building a thriving community*. But there are some characteristics shared by most, if not all, of those who are doing well: (1) employment opportunities in both the private and public sectors; (2) strong public schools; (3) good basic municipal services – water, sewer, public safety, parks, and recreation; (4) attention to and pride in the aesthetics of the community; and (5) an abundance of civic capacity, exercised in part through religious and nonprofit organizations.

Option 1: Create an Economic Development Fund for Ohio's Small Hub Towns. The overall profile of heartland towns contrasts significantly with those of public and private college towns. To whatever extent this is attributable to the value these communities place on education, the direct economic impact of higher education institutions is considerable (see Table 1).[52] Increasingly, this economic impact is intentional rather than passive.

There are outstanding recent examples of intentional "town-gown" collaboration in local economic development within Ohio. For example, the remarkable transformation of the City of Kent, which might be directly traced back to environmental organizing in the early 1970s, achieved critical scale from the partnership of Kent State University with municipal government and the business community over the past decade.

In Oberlin, progress toward economic revitalization, elimination of carbon emissions, and restoration of local agriculture derives from a partnership between Oberlin University, the City of Oberlin, and a variety of institutional and private partners. And in Granville, Denison University has partnered with the Village and Township in expanding green space and strengthening local businesses; reaching out further, it has become a partner with Licking County and the City of Newark in revitalizing Newark's downtown.

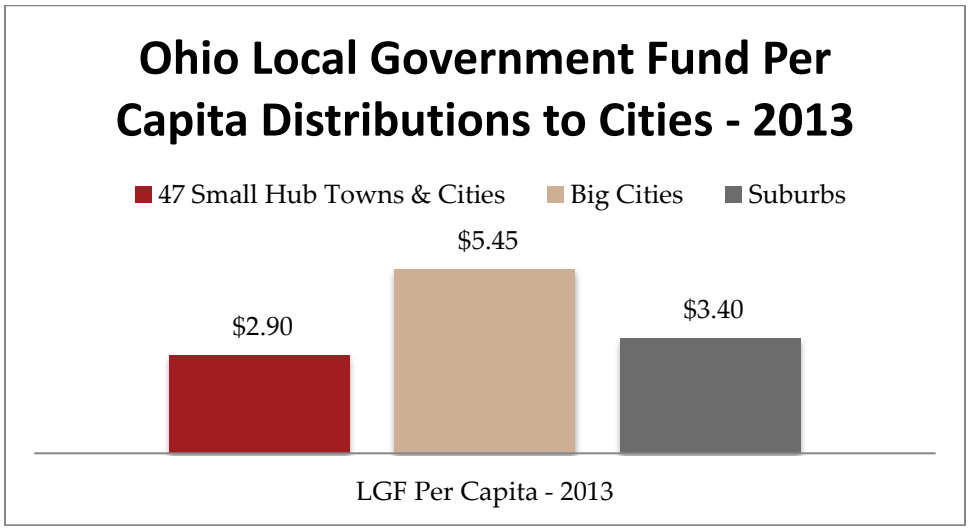
Most heartland towns lack anything equivalent to the impact of institutional resources and civic engagement available from universities. Some might benefit from similar collaborations with nonprofit hospitals and health systems, but to date, such initiatives on a similar scale have not materialized. While most heartland towns have community

colleges or branch campuses, rarely do they provide the economic impact of a four-year university.

Compounding their problem in recent years has been the decline in state revenue sharing with municipalities through the State of Ohio's Local Government Fund (LGF). State subsidies to municipalities under the program have been reduced by about three-fifths, from about $58 million a decade ago to $22 million in 2015. This has further eroded the capacity of small municipal governments to invest in community and economic development.

This is especially noteworthy for smaller towns because even prior to these cuts, small hub towns and cities received significantly less than what might be called a "fair share" of these dollars. The formula for distribution, based on each city's proportion of all

Chart 37 [53]



municipal income taxes collected statewide, strongly favors big cities because (1) they have large numbers of non-resident commuters who pay taxes both where they live and where they work; and (2) they have more large businesses paying taxes (corporations, as well as individuals, pay Ohio's municipal income taxes). This same effect benefits the wealthiest suburbs, such as Blue Ash which at $14.13 in 2013, received over four times the average per capita distribution of the 47 small hub towns and cities, even with a significantly lower tax rate (1.25 percent versus an average rate of 2.26 percent for the small hubs towns and cities).

Against this backdrop, it is imperative for the State of Ohio to create a new pool of economic development funds targeted to small hub towns and cities. Dollars might be used for infrastructure projects tied to new private sector job creation, or for direct business grants and loans that have the same result. Projects with matching funds from

other sources might be given priority, and claw back provisions for those failing to meet new job creation targets should be put in place.

A substantial fund for this purpose might be easily created within the range of total (county and municipality shares) reductions in the LGF over the past six years – and an annual figure of $50 million does not seem unreasonable.

Option 2: Conduct a "Blue Ribbon" Review of State – Local Revenue Sharing Programs. The State of Ohio is unique in the extent to which it shares with local governments and schools its various forms of taxation (income, sales, property) while also providing numerous forms of direct revenue sharing. Concurrently, the state makes available to local governments numerous grant, loan and debt instruments, some aimed at economic development, others at transportation and public utility infrastructure.

Over the last 20 years, longstanding and relatively stable revenue sharing arrangements have been significantly disrupted by, among other things, reductions in the LGF, repeal of the estate tax, changes in the state's funding of the property tax rollback, and the advent of casino gambling revenue sharing. Concurrently, major new economic development and infrastructure initiatives have had a variable impact on communities across the state.

A thorough review of these changes and their impact, along with potential reforms that assure the fairness and effectiveness of state revenue sharing with local governments, would (1) create a shared understanding and vision among state and local leaders for the coming decades; (2) provide opportunities for reform of such inequities as the distribution formula for the municipal share of the LGF noted above; and (3) identify opportunities for aligning, and creating synergy between, the numerous state – local programs. A small commission of 15 members, drawn from state, local, business, and nonprofit leaders, together with a professional staff of about 7 to 10, could complete such a review by the end of the next biennium.

Option 3: Establish an Ohio Youth Employment and Study (YES) Program. Heartland towns have relatively high poverty and near-poverty rates. They also have a lower proportion of college graduates among working age adults than any other type of community, spend less per student on primary and secondary education, and have high childhood poverty rates and the highest teen pregnancy rates. There is abundant anecdotal evidence that the drug epidemic among small town youth, including high rates of methamphetamine, heroin, and other opioid use, is as prevalent as in the big cities, even though it is not tracked in the same manner.[54]

As documented above, is not hyperbole to describe the depth and breadth of youth poverty in Ohio's heartland towns as a crisis. Yet, the State of Ohio's investments in subsidizing actual jobs for young people are limited to a portion of federal block grant funds through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program (TANF). Even the future of this investment, which in the past has provided subsidies of up to $45 million

for about 12,000 summer jobs, is unclear, as the state undertakes implementation of comprehensive workforce plans under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA), and rollout of a statewide Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program (CCMEP) for all 88 counties.

In an analysis prepared for The Center for Community Solutions, Anne Jordan discusses the rationale for diverting funds from subsidizing summer jobs for youth to case management of unsubsidized jobs. Her conclusions, based upon extensive analyses of similar initiatives in other states, favor such a transition.[55]

Yet, these arguments fail on two grounds. First, there is a projected balance of unspent TANF funds that could be as much as $140 million by the end of the state's 2017 fiscal year. These funds could be drawn down for rolling out CCMEP, leaving current TANF funding of subsidized jobs for young people intact.

Second, the state has no recent history of investing its own resources in subsidizing jobs for young people. It is hard to imagine a more timely investment. Creation of such a program, targeting youth from small and large communities alike, would be a long-term investment paying short-term dividends in better living conditions, better educational outcomes, and reduced drug abuse. Free of federal TANF and WIOA regulations, incentives, and sanctions, the program would be free to focus exclusively on workers and employers – essentially, cutting through the "red tape."

Compensation combining minimum wages and post-secondary savings accounts could be offered. While coordination with the existing youth employment program would be desirable, it might be managed through municipal governments, community colleges, and/or university branch campuses. This would offer an alternative to the customary connection to the county public welfare and workforce bureaucracies, while providing early exposure to post-secondary education, as well as direct engagement with the local governments with which most people identify. In order to create "real world" employment opportunities, the program might include for-profit as well as public and private nonprofit employers, provided there are tight standards barring substitutions of previously existing jobs with subsidized positions.

Focusing primarily on summer jobs, along with a smaller number of jobs with limited hours during the school year, a program in the range of $35 million per year could create about 10,000 jobs, approximately doubling the number of TANF-funded jobs. Start-up funding during the first year would likely run in range of 10 to 12 percent of this cost.

Option 4: Increase state support for teen pregnancy prevention. While national and state teen birthrates have declined over the past 25 years, they remain especially high in heartland towns and big cities. The impact on individuals and communities is summarized as follows by the National Conference of State Legislatures:

> Adolescent pregnancy and parenthood are closely associated with a host of social and economic issues that affect teen parents, their children and society. Teenage mothers are less likely to finish high school and are more likely to live in poverty, depend on public assistance, and be in poor health than slightly older mothers. Their children are more likely to suffer health and cognitive disadvantages, come in contact with the child welfare and correctional systems, live in poverty, drop out of high school and become teen parents themselves. According to a 2010 analysis by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, the annual public cost of teen childbearing—due to the cost of public health care, foster care, incarceration and lost tax revenue—is nearly $9.4 billion.[56]

Through the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), Ohio students self-report that by 12th grade close to 60% have had sex.[57] Yet only 40% of those report using a hormonal form of contraception.

Education is fundamental when it comes to teen pregnancy prevention; it can happen at home, school and in clinic settings. There is an extensive body of research supporting investment in group-level teen pregnancy prevention in school and after school environments.[58] The curriculums ground teens in the facts of pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease while promoting communication and health relationships; many include parent components. Outcomes include delayed sexual debut, and reduced risk taking behavior. While our big cities have the public health infrastructure to apply for direct federal funding for these programs, this is not the case in our heartland cities. State investment in programs that meet the U.S. Office of Health and Human Services standards for evidence-based initiatives is a crucial first step toward decreasing the teen pregnancy rates in these cities.

From the clinic angle, other middle-American communities have taken the lead on making low maintenance and therefore very effective methods of family planning, the IUD and implant, available to young women – with astounding outcomes. The state of Colorado has seen its teen pregnancy rate drop by 48% since increasing education on and access to these methods. They report nearly the same outcomes among unmarried women under the age of 25 who have not completed high school – another vulnerable group.

Pilot programs in Northeast Ohio, Cincinnati and Columbus clinical settings have seen great uptake of IUDs and implants when patient education and same day placements are available. However, provider-level barriers to access persist in much of the state. Investment in clinic-level training to equip providers and their staff with up to date guidelines and contractive counseling techniques, clinic flow changes to accommodate same-day placements, and guidance for stocking and appropriately billing for reimbursement will ensure young women have access to the information they need and methods they prefer.

The #1 risk for a teen pregnancy is having already experienced pregnancy as a teen. Providing access to contraception before leaving the hospital post-delivery for a new teen mom, and combining social work and life planning with contraception access, have been successful in preventing a second teenage pregnancies.

Living in poverty, having a mother who gave birth as a teen, and limited maternal education are other key risk factors for teen pregnancy. We know what works to reduce the teen pregnancy rate and the Centers for Disease Control considers teenaged pregnancy a "winnable battle."[59] Yet without intentional state attention and investment, high rates of teen pregnancy in our small cities will continue unabated.

Option 5: Develop and sustain a statewide civic capacity-building initiative through an Ohio Communities Roundtable. This ought not be a new government program, although the State of Ohio might become an underwriting partner. Rather, it should be sponsored by a multi-sector partnership of stable statewide organizations or networks (public, private, religious, and nonprofit), to provide (1) support for community-based leadership development programs, including expansion of those already operating; (2) direct technical assistance to local communities seeking it; (3) regular regional and statewide conferences, trade shows, and networking events; and (4) a dynamic Website providing methods, materials, tools, and direct connections to successful initiatives around the state, for local organizers in Ohio communities. Participation should be invited and encouraged from existing statewide organizations and their local affiliates – from chambers of commerce to environmental councils, local leadership development programs to parent-teacher organizations, pastoral care networks to community recreation programs.

Public financial support for such an initiative might be provided by expanding upon the purposes of the Local Government Innovation Fund (LGIF) (currently funded at about $12 million per year) and/or Healthier Buckeye Program (currently funded at about $11 million for the biennium). Both of these programs are predicated on collaboration, within or between local governments for the LGIF, and between businesses, social services, health care providers, service recipients, schools, managed-care organizations, faith-based organizations, and other stakeholders in Healthier Buckeye. *In presuming a capacity for collaboration, neither program currently addresses a more fundamental problem in small towns and cities: inadequate civic capacity upon which to build such collaboration.*

Option 6: Encourage City-based and Neighborhood-based Social Services. As noted above, county governments in Ohio generally organize and manage human service programs. For the purposes of managing access to and accountability of the major income transfer programs such as SNAP and Medicaid, there is nothing wrong with this arrangement. However, in the provision of health and social services, bringing the focus of programs to a more local level is essential: people identify with their hometown and neighborhood, and that identity can be significant in determining the success of a program.

Ohio's Healthier Buckeye Program is designed to encourage collaboration, as noted above. Explicitly bringing into these partnerships municipal governments, which manage zoning and building code enforcement, and school systems, whose purposes and resources are specifically aimed at the capacity of students to overcome the social problems that they bring with them to the classroom, should be a priority.

Raising the profile of the Healthier Buckeye program, aligning its modest financial resources with other major social service funding, and creating a support network among its participating projects, all offer means of making it successful.

An example of the potential benefits of networking and adapting successful local initiatives in new communities, is the Conestoga Program initiated in Port Clinton by the Mental Health and Recovery Board of Erie and Ottawa Counties. Virtually unknown outside of its home communities, the partners in the project (including United Way and City of Port Clinton) focused intensive evidence-based behavioral health services on a neighborhood that had lost a major employer, and experienced deterioration and disinvestment.

During its first phase in Port Clinton, which focused on reducing "incivilities," police complaint calls declined by 57 percent and reports of violence by 35 percent. Self-referrals for alcohol, drug, mental health, and parenting services went up by 43 percent; the drug court success rate soared; and declining housing values turned around. Remarkably, behavioral health caseloads dropped sufficiently to actually save more dollars than were invested in the program. The success of the Conestoga Program led the lead agency to expand it to parts of Sandusky, where it has achieved similar results.

Could it be replicated elsewhere? Successful local initiatives are very much dependent on local leadership, institutions, relationships, and resources, and may not be easily replicated *in toto*. Yet, portions of them might be adapted to other communities – if only others knew about them. Successful initiatives often gain a synergy beyond their initial intent, adding to the value of sharing, and learning from, the experiences of other communities.

Option 7: Enact and Implement the Provisions of Substitute House Bill 130 of the 131st General Assembly, Creating a DataOhio Board. Substitute House Bill 130 of the 131st General Assembly creates a state data board to develop and recommend standards for and access to public data. If adopted, the board should undertake making a variety of state governmental data available in formats that can be sorted and aggregated by municipality, school district, and township – indeed, according to as many political subdivisions as possible. In the human services arena, where reporting generally is available only at the county level, this might include Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid data. This would enable more localized and targeted initiatives to improve nutrition or health status by hospitals and health systems, combatting poverty by organizations utilizing the Bridges Out of Poverty model, or

multi-sector approaches to mental health, family security, and neighborhood stability like the Conestoga Program discussed above.

Concurrently, the routine collection and reporting of municipal income tax data by the Ohio Department of Taxation should be enhanced. Currently available reports on the over 620 villages and cities levying the tax do not distinguish taxes paid by individuals living inside and outside the jurisdiction, nor the portion paid by for-profit businesses. Understanding the mix among these is strategically important to local leaders in executing economic development strategies. For policy makers, having such information would shed light on the varying capacities of municipalities to generate local tax revenue, essential to revenue sharing programs.

The combined cost to the State of Ohio of initiatives 1 and 3 would be about $85 million per year, all of it focused on job creation. This is substantial – but still only about one-quarter the value of annual reductions to LGF spending from 2009 levels.

Afterword

This report had a long incubation, dating back about four years to my tenure as executive director of The Center for Community Solutions. At that time, we made a couple of lukewarm runs at analyzing demographic and health data about Ohio's small hub towns and cities, but then left it to cool as other matters commandeered our attention.

The sudden currency of the topic in this year's Presidential election rekindled a lingering interest. I was pleased to discover that during the intervening years, the United States Census Bureau had begun aggregating data from the American Community Survey (ACS) over rolling five-year periods. Even better, the Hudson, Ohio-based startup company Public Insight had posted the ACS data, along with several large education databases, on its user-friendly public portal.

But the catalyst was an unplanned day trip through the town of Coshocton early this year. This once charming and vibrant community appeared nothing short of desolate. Blocks of storefronts were devoid of human traffic – several of them were boarded-up. Auto and pedestrian traffic was sparse, even around the county courthouse and its square. It reminded me of the similar scenes in other small cities, towns, and villages around Ohio that had stirred interest, concern, and curiosity several years back.

To what extent had the decline of the industrial economy in small cities like Coshocton, East Liverpool, Zanesville, and Newark, turned their quality of life in the direction of the Ohio's big cities? What differentiated their experience from that of small cities that seemed to be thriving, such as Wooster, Kent, or Findlay? How vast had the pattern of decline become, how is it manifested, and what, if anything, might be done to turn things around?

The data and suggestions offered above are a few short steps in a long journey, several of which might be taken in short order. First, even though the combined population of the 47 small hub towns and cities included in the data are home to about 10 percent of all Ohioans, they include less than half of the communities that might fit the definition of a "hub." Expanding the database to include all county seats and homes to universities and hospitals would provide a more thorough foundation for analysis.

Second, creation of an additional group of benchmark communities – small towns and villages that are *not* hubs or suburbs, would provide a more complete picture of conditions in small Ohio communities. Third, the suburban benchmark cohort should be enlarged. Care was taken to choose a broadly representative cross-section (some, like Blue Ash, largely white collar; some, like Norwood, largely blue collar; some, like University Heights and Gahanna, racially integrated; some, like Fairview Park, predominantly White; one, Boardman, an urban township). Nonetheless, these 15 suburban communities represent less than 10 percent of the total number of suburbs, and a larger group would be strengthen the data set.

While the data compilation, analysis, and recommendations - and errors and misjudgments as well – are my own, they would not have been possible without a lot of help and fine-tuning. Thanks are due to Dan Quigg and his team at Public Insight, whose incomparable online data service makes available multiple national, state, and local databases; Chris Lintner, Dan's colleague at Public Insight, for his assistance in understanding the versatility of their platform and putting it to use; Merissa Piazza, program manager, Center for Economic Development at Cleveland State University's Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs, for providing Bureau of Labor Statistics data; Julie Becker and Kelly Russell at the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System for providing counts of active members employed by Ohio's county governments; Maxwell Hennon at the Ohio Department of Education for guidance in accessing public data on employment by Ohio's public school districts; Mike Williams at the National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) for assistance in understanding differences in financial reporting practices between public and private colleges and universities; Mark Salling, Ph.D., director of the Northern Ohio Data and Research Center at Cleveland State University's Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs, for advice regarding the limitations of ACS data from margins of error; Gene Krebs for being a patient listener, helpful brain stormer, spammer of boundless bibliographical resources, and gentle contrarian; Philip E. DeVol, author, consultant, and veteran of the long war on poverty, for sharing his "precariat" data; John Corlett, president and executive director of The Center for Community Solutions, and Emily Campbell, associate director, Tara Britton, senior fellow, Melissa Federman, Treuhaft Chair for Health Planning, and Joe Ahern, research associate, for helpful suggestions, corrections, elaborations, and willingness to let me roam back into the stable after a couple years at pasture; and Roslyn Kaleal, copy editor extraordinaire for The Center for Community Solutions.

John A. Begala
October, 2016

Appendix A
Heartland Towns, Public and Private College Towns and Benchmark Communities

	Small Hub Towns & Cities (47)		Benchmark Communities (23)	
Village or City	Cluster	Group	City	Cluster
Ashtabula	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Cincinnati	Big Cities
Chillicothe	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Cleveland	Big Cities
Coshocton	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Columbus	Big Cities
Dover	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Akron	Big Cities
East Liverpool	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Canton	Big Cities
Elyria	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Dayton	Big Cities
Hamilton	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Toledo	Big Cities
Hillsboro	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Youngstown	Big Cities
Ironton	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Blue Ash	Suburbs
Lancaster	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Boardman Township	Suburbs
Lebanon	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Fairlawn	Suburbs
Lima	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Fairview Park	Suburbs

Lorain OH	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Gahanna	Suburbs
Mansfield	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Green	Suburbs
Marion	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Hilliard	Suburbs
Massillon	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Huber Heights	Suburbs
Middletown	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Loveland	Suburbs
Newark	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Norwood	Suburbs
New Philadelphia	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Oakwood	Suburbs
Ravenna	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Strongsville	Suburbs
Salem	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Sylvania	Suburbs
Sandusky	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	University Heights	Suburbs
St. Clairsville	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns	Worthington	Suburbs
Steubenville	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns		
Warren	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns		
Xenia	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns		

Zanesville	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Heartland Towns		
Athens	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Public College Towns		
Bowling Green	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Public College Towns		
Kent	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Public College Towns		
Oxford	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Public College Towns		
Portsmouth	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Public College Towns		
Ada	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Private College Towns		
Circleville	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Private College Towns		
Delaware	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Private College Towns		
Findlay	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Private College Towns		
Gambier	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Private College Towns		
Granville	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Private College Towns		
Marietta	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Private College Towns		
Mount Vernon	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Private College Towns		

Oberlin	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Private College Towns		
Springfield	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Private College Towns		
Tiffin	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Private College Towns		
Urbana	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Private College Towns		
Wilmington	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Private College Towns		
Wooster	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Private College Towns		
Yellow Springs	Small Hub Towns & Cities	Private College Towns		

Appendix B
County Seats, Higher Education Institutions, Hospitals and Health Systems

Village/City	County Seat	Higher Education	Hospital
Heartland Towns			
Ashtabula	X	Kent State University at Ashtabula	Ashtabula County Medical Center
Chillicothe	X	Ohio University-Chillicothe Campus	Adena Medical Center Chillicothe Veterans Affairs Medical Center
Coshocton	X		Coshocton County Memorial Hospital
Dover			Union Hospital (Dover OH)
East Liverpool		Kent State University at East Liverpool	East Liverpool City Hospital
Elyria	X	Lorain County Community College	University Hospitals Elyria Medical Center
Hamilton	X	Miami University-Hamilton	Fort Hamilton Hospital
Hillsboro	X	Southern State Community College	Highland District Hospital
Ironton	X	Ohio University-Southern Campus	
Lancaster	X	Ohio University-Lancaster Campus	Fairfield Medical Center
Lebanon	X		
Lima	X	James A Rhodes State College Ohio State University-Lima	Lima Memorial Health System St. Rita's Medical Center

Lorain			Mercy Regional Medical Center (Lorain OH)
Mansfield		North Central State College Ohio State University-Mansfield Campus	OhioHealth MedCentral Mansfield Hospital
Marion	X	Marion Technical College Ohio State University-Marion Campus	OhioHealth Marion General Hospital
Massillon			Affinity Medical Center
Middletown		Miami University-Middletown	Atrium Medical Center (Middletown OH)
Newark	X	Central Ohio Technical College Ohio State University-Newark Campus	Licking Memorial Hospital
New Philadelphia	X	Kent State University at Tuscarawas	
Ravenna	X		UH Portage Medical Center
Salem		Kent State University at Salem	Salem Regional Medical Center
Sandusky	X		Firelands Regional Health System
St. Clairsville	X	Belmont College	Belmont Community Hospital
Steubenville	X	Eastern Gateway Community College	Trinity Health System

Warren	X	Kent State University at Trumbull	Trumbull Memorial Hospital Trumbull Memorial Hospital
Xenia	X		Greene Memorial Hospital
Zanesville	X	Zane State College	Genesis HealthCare System
Public College Towns			
Athens	X	Ohio University-Main Campus	O'Bleness Memorial Hospital
Bowling Green	X	Bowling Green State University-Main Campus	Wood County Hospital
Kent		Kent State University at Kent	
Oxford		Miami University-Oxford	McCullough-Hyde Memorial Hospital/TriHealth
Portsmouth	X	Shawnee State University	Southern Ohio Medical Center
Private College Towns			
Ada	X	Ohio Northern University	
Circleville	X	Ohio Christian University	Berger Health System
Delaware	X	Ohio Wesleyan University	OhioHealth Grady Memorial Hospital
Findlay	X	The University of Findlay	Blanchard Valley Hospital
Gambier		Kenyon College	
Granville		Denison University	
Marietta	X	Marietta College	Marietta Memorial Hospital

Mount Vernon	X	Mount Vernon Nazarene University	Knox Community Hospital
Oberlin		Oberlin College	Mercy Allen Hospital
Springfield	X	Wittenberg University	Springfield Regional Medical Center
Tiffin	X	Tiffin University	Mercy Tiffin Hospital
Urbana	X	Urbana University	
Wilmington	X	Wilmington College	Clinton Memorial Hospital
Wooster	X	The College of Wooster	Wooster Community Hospital
Yellow Springs		Antioch College	

Appendix C
Supplemental Charts

Chart A [60]

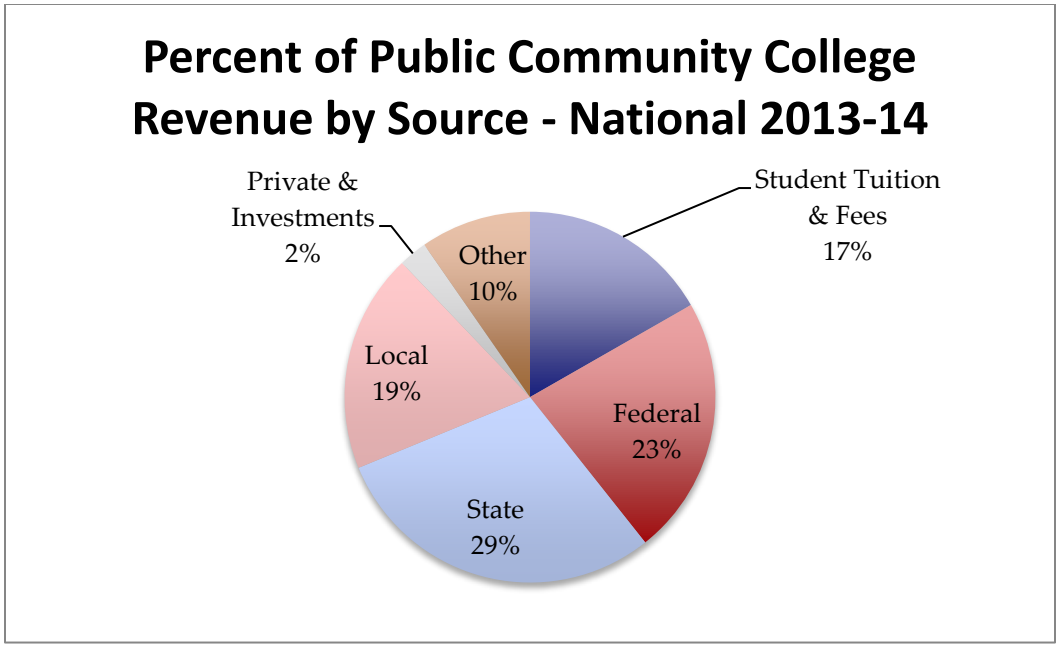


Chart B [61]

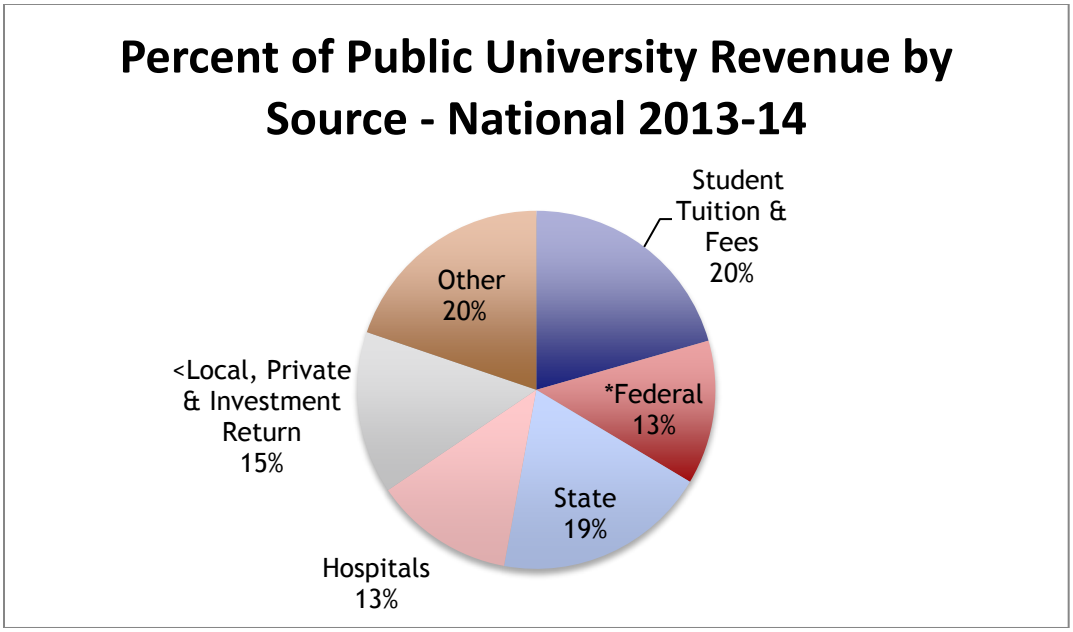


Chart C [62]

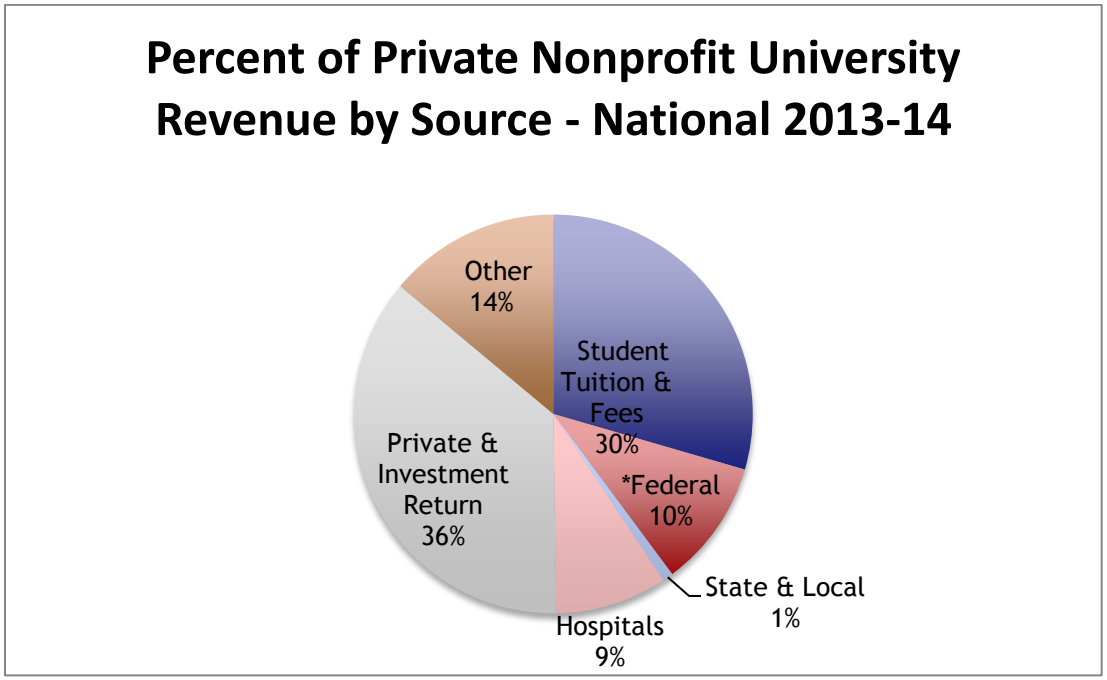
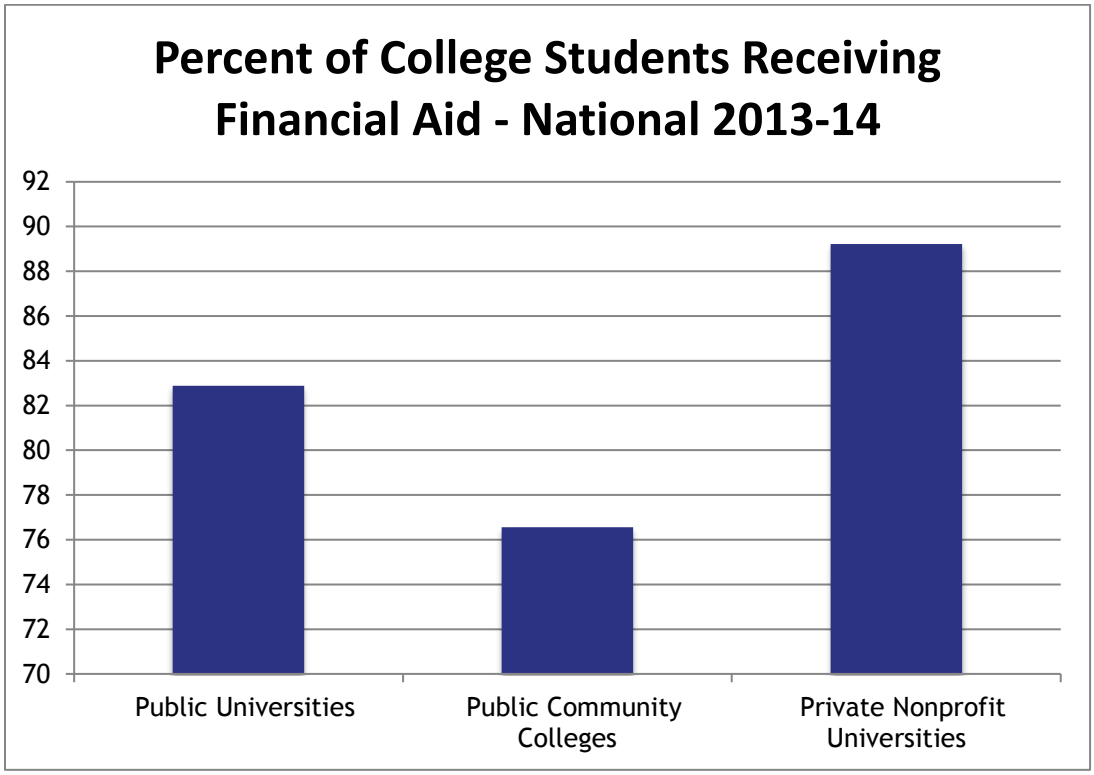


Chart D [63]



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