Osceola County

Community Needs and Opportunities: A Conversation Opener

What is it like living today in **Osceola County** – and what **opportunities** and **challenges** face us as we forge a future together? What **resources** can we tap to move our community ahead?

This is a conversation worth having. The facts, figures and perspective offered in this report are meant to help open that conversation. Armed with insights about your community, you can begin a community process that includes setting bold goals and harnessing all your resources to help the residents of Osceola County get ahead, stay ahead and leave behind a stronger community for their children.

October 2016

Osceola County Community Foundation
An affiliate of Fremont Area Community Foundation

Osceola County Community Foundation (OCCF) seeks to make Osceola County a better place to live and work by enhancing the quality of life and building a strong community spirit. OCCF was established in 1990 and makes grants from a collection of permanent endowments to benefit the community. Osceola County Community Foundation is a geographic affiliate of Fremont Area Community Foundation. Fremont Area Community Foundation manages OCCF's assets while a local advisory board reviews grant proposals and recommends funding. For more information about either community foundation, visit facommunityfoundation.org or call 231.924.5350.

Center for Rural Entrepreneurship
energizing entrepreneurial communities

The **Center for Rural Entrepreneurship** helps community leaders build a prosperous future by supporting and empowering business, social and civic entrepreneurs. With its roots and hearts in rural America, the Center helps communities of all sizes and interests by bringing together research, community engagement and strategy development. The Center's Solution Area Teams empower communities to discover their own answers to the challenges and opportunities they face.

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE
Community Strategies Group

The **Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group** helps rural, urban and suburban communities act together to create more vibrant regions that advance and sustain prosperity and wellbeing for local people, places and firms, including those on the economic margins. Aspen CSG connects community and economic development leaders across the nation and equips them with good ideas, tools and strategies to improve results and prospects for their regions.

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2	What do we think about Osceola County?	This section features the responses to a 20-question public survey of residents in Osceola County. The survey was open for anyone to answer from May 5th through June 3rd, 2016.
3	Who is living in Osceola County?	Each of these four sections profiles recent data on five factors related to the topic of the section. It explains why each measure is important, and highlights a key point or two. The underlying facts and figures all come from publicly available sources, like the US Census, the State of Michigan and other agencies that conduct research across the country.
4	How are Osceola County's people doing?	
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6	How is Osceola County, the place, doing?	

Using this Booklet as a Conversation Guide

Please use this booklet with local organizations, groups, family or neighbors to start a discussion about how Osceola County is doing today, and what we might want to address together to make the County an even better place tomorrow – to live, work and raise a family.

There are reflection questions at the end of each section – and some Overall Priority Questions on the back cover. We encourage you to work with local groups or neighbors to answer the reflection questions individually, and then share your answers with each other before you answer the Overall Priority Questions.

The Osceola County Community Foundation wants to better target its grantmaking and action on priorities set by the community. So the Community Foundation is eager to hear from any group or individual who has used this guide. We would especially like to hear:

- When you used it – and with what group and how many people.
- Your group's answers to the Overall Priority Questions.
- Any other ideas you have about the top priorities people in our area should take on together that will build a better future for Osceola County.

Please send the Osceola County Community Foundation your ideas – contact details are on the back cover.

About the Data

This report is intended to start a conversation about community opportunities and needs. As a result, the data included provides a general overview of the county's people, the place and the economy using simple graphs and estimates.

Every indicator is listed with its date and data source. If a particular indicator interests you, we recommend accessing the original data source. The source will provide additional information including margins of error and more nuanced discussion on how to interpret the estimates. This is particularly helpful for smaller communities where estimates can be less accurate.

If you want someone to help organize or facilitate a group conversation or discussion, help is available! Please contact Maria Gonzalez at 231.924.5350 or at mgonzalez@facommunityfoundation.org.

1 What resources can Osceola County tap to support community betterment?

Finding the resources to support community development is a pressing challenge. But, every community has financial assets that, when developed and managed properly, can create a lasting community impact. How big is that opportunity?

Resources for Development

Successful communities regularly reinvest in themselves. In Osceola County, community philanthropy represents one of the most underdeveloped resources for furthering community betterment projects and programs. One important way of assessing a community's capacity to give is a region's **Transfer of Wealth** (TOW). TOW measures how much wealth will pass from the estate of one generation to the next.

Current and former residents who care deeply about their hometown are likely interested in using or leaving some of what they have to support community betterment now and in the future. Giving from one's accumulated wealth or estate creates a permanent legacy that supports the hometown forever. Understanding the tremendous size of the community's TOW is the first step in capturing its potential for community development.

Osceola County's Transfer of Wealth

$295,000,000

will transfer between generations in the next 10 years

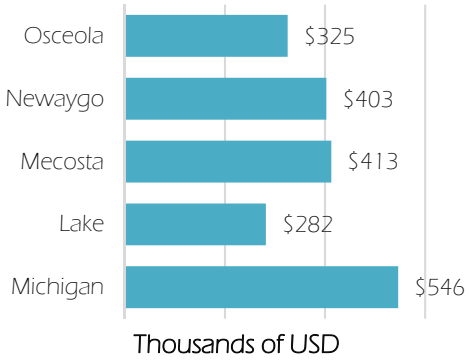
$14,700,000

is 5%, which, if captured to support community betterment, could generate $740,000 annually

$7,400,000

is what the community could generate over a decade if it captures and endows just 5%. Imagine what that could do for your community!

a. Average household net worth



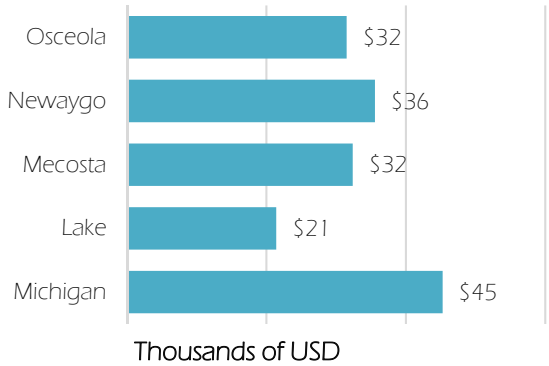
Why it matters: Many communities and community residents see themselves as poor and believe they don't have the financial means to make their place better. Understanding that every community—even your community—has wealth, can shift attitudes from "the glass is half empty" to "the glass is half full" and motivate action.

How the county stacks up: Osceola County has lower average household current net worth when compared to Michigan and has the third lowest in the region. Nevertheless, in 2015, 8.1% of permanent resident households are classified as high net worth – with estates averaging greater than $2 million.

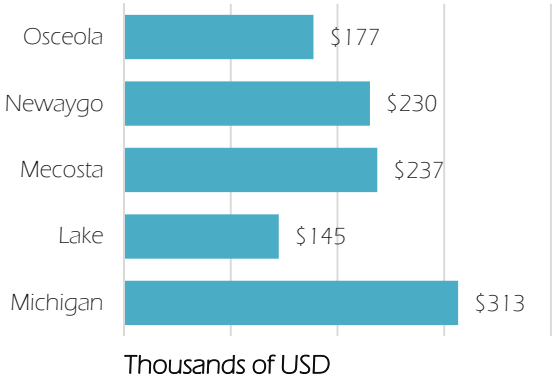
b. 10-year TOW Opportunity (per household)

Why it matters: Understanding how much wealth is likely to transfer in the short term is important to communities. This allows communities to set specific goals to work toward for how much they want to try to secure in an endowment for the community. Communities with specific endowment-building goals tend to do better in achieving or exceeding them.

How the county stacks up: Over the coming decade (2015-2025), $295 million in household wealth will transfer from one generation to the next. This equals $32,000 per household on average. Osceola County has the second lowest level of 10-Year TOW opportunity in this region. However, there is still significant philanthropic opportunity.



c. 50-year TOW Opportunity (per household)



Why it matters: Understanding how much wealth will transfer over a longer term is also important. It can motivate communities to take a more proactive approach to economic development. This allows communities to envision where they want to be in the long term and to start building a pool of funding to achieve their vision.

How the county stacks up: The estimated transfer of wealth opportunity for Osceola County over the next two generations (2015-2065) is a remarkable $1.7 billion, which equals $177,000 per household. Investing in community philanthropy today can position the county to grow significant community endowments over the coming years.

Trends and Data of Note

- The transfer of wealth estimates for Osceola County are conservative – because they reflect only measures of permanent resident household wealth, which do not include corporate or former resident wealth.
- Other likely donors that would contribute to community endowments in Osceola County include:
    - **Regular Seasonal Residents.** Every year, Osceola County's population grows significantly as seasonal visitors come to the County to enjoy its lakes, rivers and forests. Many of these visitors are "regulars" with deep ties to their seasonal homes. There is donor potential among these regular seasonal residents.
    - **Former Residents.** For years, many of Osceola County's young people have been graduating and moving outside of the County. Many of these first-generation former residents have become successful in work and life and represent a significant potential donor group who continue to care about their hometown.
    - **Land Wealth.** Cash may be tight but significant wealth is held in the County's land. Land-wealth-based charitable giving is a major opportunity for this community.
    - **Closely-Held Family Businesses.** Additional wealth can be found in closely-held family businesses. These locally-owned, rooted businesses are run by residents who care about the community and have the capacity to give back.
    - **Thrifty Retirees.** Every community has people who work hard, spend less than they make, invest well and, over time, create modest estates. The County's Thrifty Retirees have both motivation and capacity to give back to the community they love.

Discussion Questions

1.1 What one or two things most **surprised** you in this data about the Transfer of Wealth?

1.2 What one trend, fact or idea in this data and discussion gives you the most **hope** for the county?

1.3 What one trend, fact or idea in this data and discussion causes you the most **concern** – for any reason?

2 What do we think about Osceola County?

Everybody has thoughts and opinions about their community. Taken together, local opinions can offer a "reality check" on what is working and what is not.

From May 5th to June 3rd, 2016 the Osceola County Community Foundation, Mecosta County Community Foundation, Lake County Community Foundation and Fremont Area Community Foundation fielded a survey in their four home counties. The survey responses both identify regional trends and highlight opportunities and challenges in each specific county.

Demographics of **Osceola County** Responses

- 101 surveys were collected from county residents; 68% were from women and 32% were from men.
- 18% of respondents have lived in the area less than 10 years; 39% have lived in the area 30 years or more.
- 7% of respondents consider themselves part-time residents; 93% live in the area full-time.
- 74% of respondents were 35 or older (42% of the county's population is younger than 35).

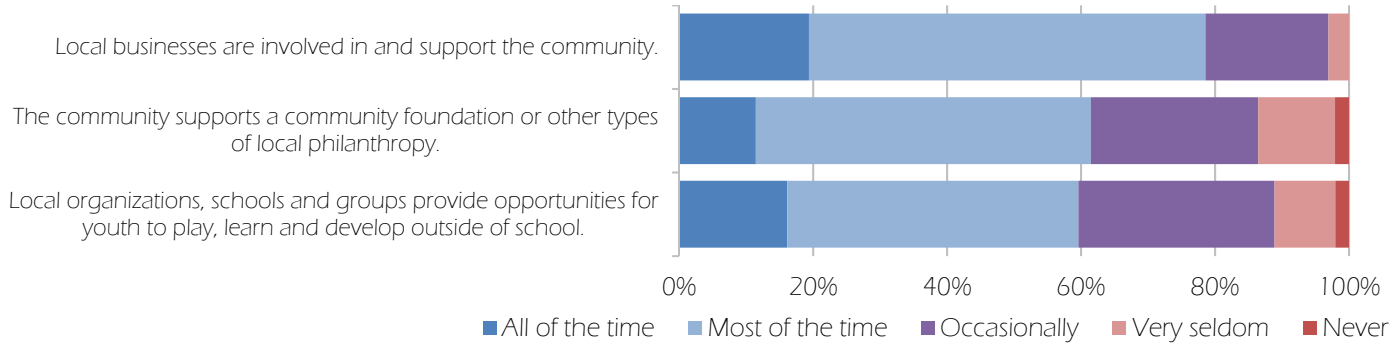
Demographics of **All** Survey Responses

- 1,030 surveys were collected throughout the area; 75% were from women and 25% were from men.
- 28% of respondents have lived in the area less than 10 years; 30% have lived in the region 30 years or more.
- 7% of respondents consider themselves part-time residents; 93% live in the area full-time.
- 74% of respondents were 35 or older (45% of the region's population is younger than 35).

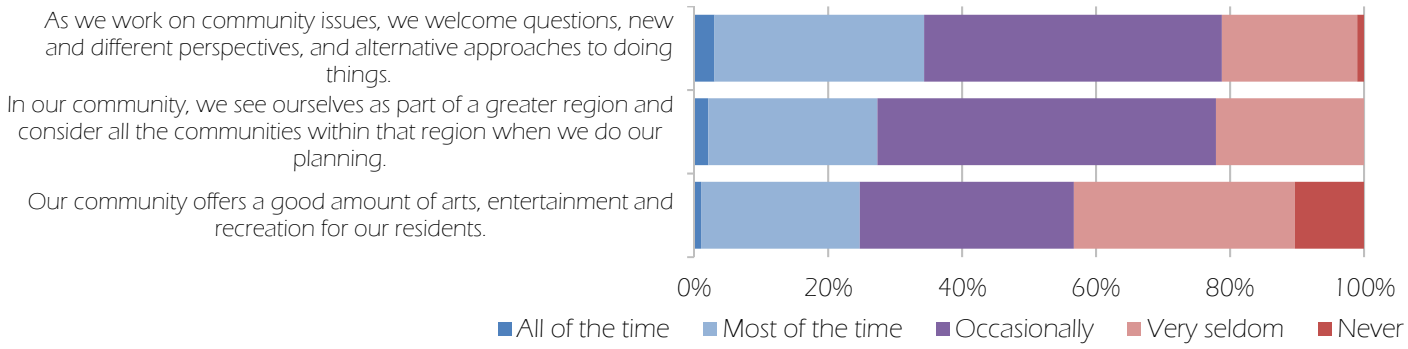
a. Ranking community strengths and weaknesses

All survey takers were presented with the same 17 positive statements about their community and were asked if the statements were always, mostly, occasionally, very seldom, or never true.

Statements rated as always or mostly true by the highest percent of residents:



Statements rated as occasionally, very seldom or never true by the highest percent of residents:



b. Open-ended reflections

Based on your experience, what are the one or two very best things about living in your community?

People/community character (56%)
Respondents said that the people within the community and the character of the community were among its best assets.

Size (42%)
Respondents said that the "small size" or "small-town living/atmosphere" was one of the best things about their community.

The weather & environment (31%)
Respondents listed the weather, the lakes & parks and the small town environment as quality benefits of the community.

Quiet/peaceful (14%)
Respondents said that the remoteness of the community gave it a quiet and peaceful atmosphere which they considered a real benefit.

Safety (9%)
Respondents said that they feel safe due to the community's small, peaceful nature. Many said children were safe because others would watch out for them.

What are the one or two most challenging things about living in your community?

Lack of amenities (31%)
Respondents cited a lack of amenities, such as shopping, dining, and medical facilities as one of the most challenging things in their community. Many cited having to travel to find what they need.

Jobs/economy (26%)
Respondents cited a lack of jobs or "the economy" as the most challenging thing about their community. Many said that there are not enough "well-paying" or "professional" jobs available.

Construction/roads (15%)
Respondents commented that the poor condition of roads and inconvenient road sign & intersection planning were community concerns.

Inconvenient location (8%)
Respondents said that the community's location & distance to necessities was a significant challenge.

Cliques/unwelcoming (8%)
Respondents noted that community residents seemed "cliquey" and "unwelcoming" to those who did not grow up in the community.

If you could wave a magic wand to change just one thing in your community, what would it be?

Different jobs, better economy (24%)
Respondents wanted to bring more jobs and a variety of jobs into the community to better the economy and raise the earnings of residents.

Repair infrastructure (19%)
Respondents wanted to improve the necessary infrastructure to better utilize or fix up abandoned buildings and maintain roads.

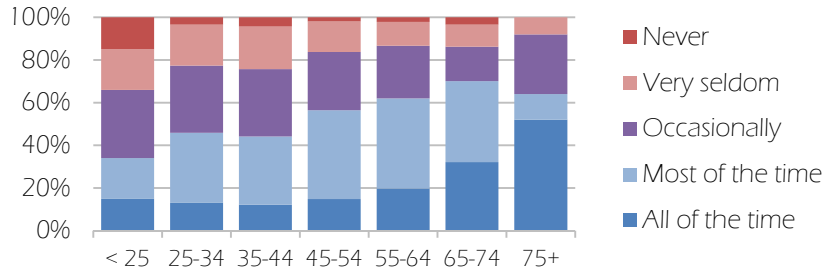
Improve education (13%)
Respondents sought a better system, including better-paid teachers, better school facilities, improved curriculum and cracking down on bullying.

More amenities (10%)
Respondents wanted to bring more restaurants, shopping destinations, and entertainment venues to the community. Some mentioned specific chains that they hoped would open in the community while others were more general and expressed desire for a vibrant business district with activities for families.

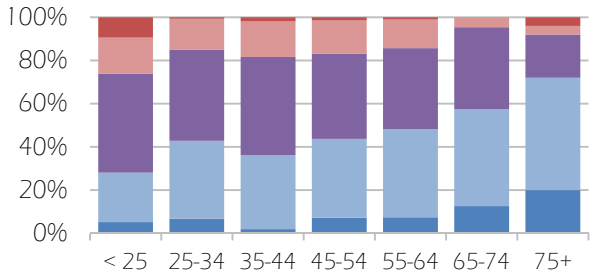
Poverty (8%)
Respondents noted that poverty needed to be addressed by the community.

c. Regional demographic trends of note

Our community offers a good amount of arts, entertainment and recreation for our residents.*



As we work on community issues, we welcome questions, new and different perspectives, and alternative approaches to doing things.*



*These graphs aggregate responses from several counties in the region.

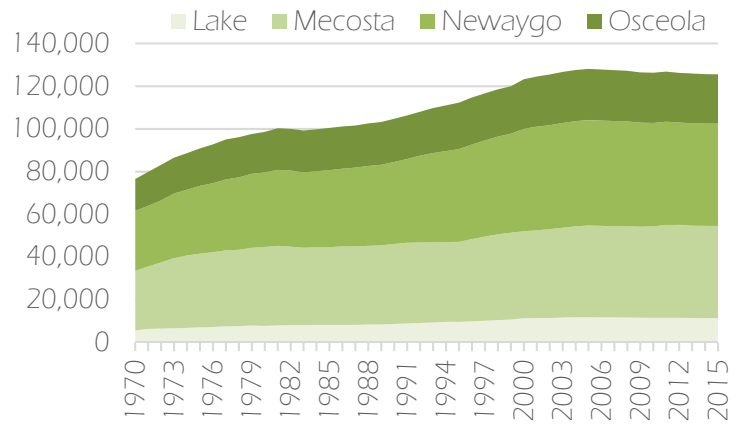
Discussion Questions

1. What one or two things most **surprised** you in this data about the area?
2. What one trend, fact or idea in this data and discussion gives you the most **hope** for the area?
3. What one trend, fact or idea in this data and discussion causes you the most **concern**?
4. Which fact in this data would you most like to **change** – and why?

3 Who is living in Osceola County?

Any examination or conversation about a community starts with a few key facts about who is living here now – and how that is different from the past and might soon change.

a. Population



Why it matters: Changes in a region's population can signal economic activity, expansion or contraction of sectors or institutions, and migration trends. Population shifts can also bring to light potential opportunities and challenges – like growth, decline, need for housing, schools and the like.

How the county stacks up: There was strong population growth between 1970 and 2000. Population growth has since levelled off and is now showing some decline. While the net loss is very small right now, it could accelerate over time given dropping birth rates and an aging population.

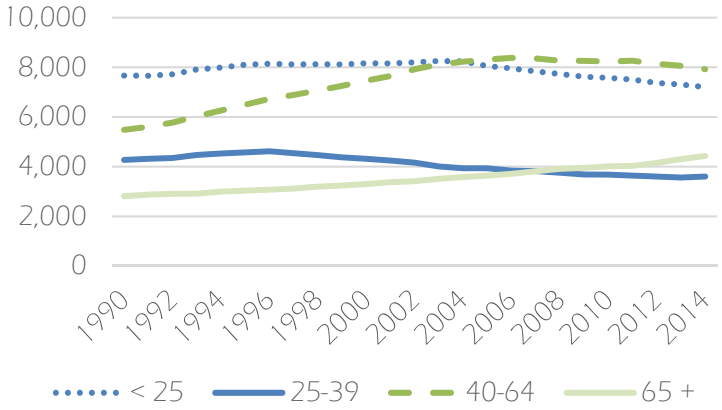
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program, 2016

b. Age composition

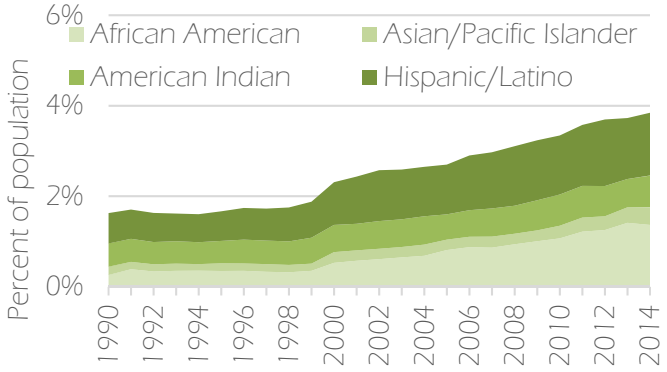
Why it matters: A population with balanced age groups is an indicator of community health and vitality. Do families think this is a good place to have children? As young people grow up, do they find the education, amenities and employment to build a life? And as they age, do they have the support and community culture they need and want to stay here?

How the county stacks up: Three out of four age cohorts are experiencing population decline with the steepest being the under-25 group, followed by 25-39 group and then the 40-64 group. Only the 65+ age cohort is growing. This pattern suggests that the county will see signs of accelerated aging in the future.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program, 2016



c. Racial and ethnic diversity



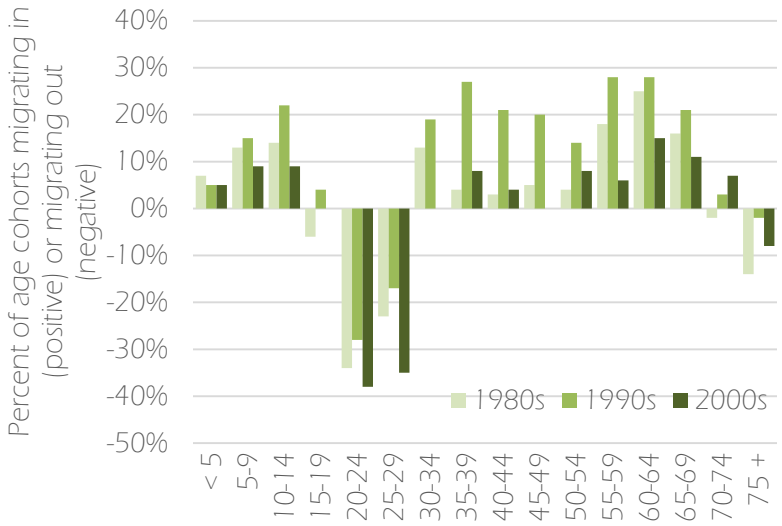
Why it matters: One dynamic demographic trend shaping our country's future is that our communities are becoming more diverse. New neighbors are more likely to be Hispanic/Latino or African American.

How the county stacks up: Osceola County has limited racial diversity. The population is predominately White (non-Hispanic). However, the proportion diverse population has more than doubled since 1990, from under 2% of total population in 1990 to almost 4% in 2014. This growth is predominantly among African American and Hispanic populations.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program, 2016

*Hispanic/Latino, for this graph, means residents who identify racially as White but ethnically as Hispanic/Latino.

d. Net migration



Why it matters: Residents moving out of a region subtracted from new residents moving in define its net migration. Big changes in net migration for any age group can signal significant shifts in a region's future.

How the county stacks up: There is a significant outmigration of younger adults after graduation from high school and college, followed by a relatively strong rebound in population by family- and career-forming younger adults. The data shows mixed migration of older generations with rising loss of the 75+ group. For comparison, in the 2000s, statewide net migration was negative for almost all age groups.

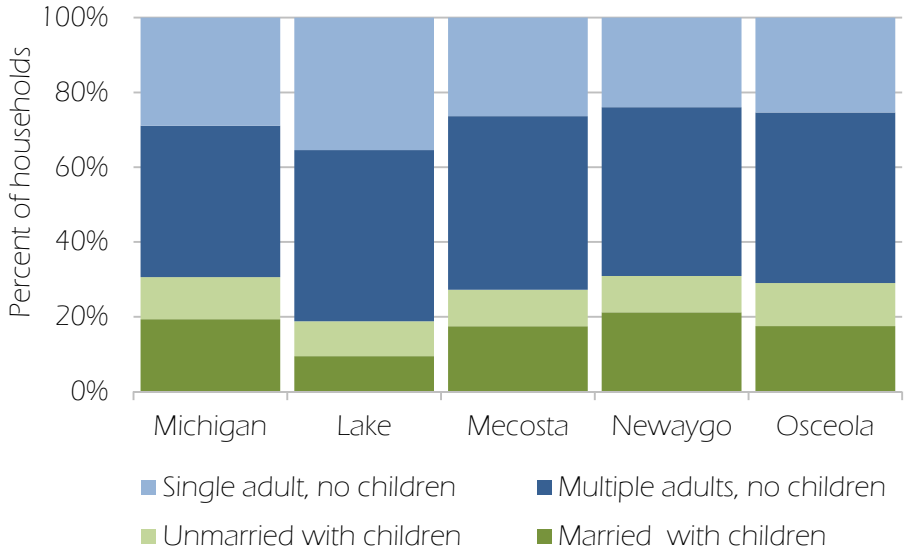
Source: Center for Demography and Ecology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2013

e. Household structure

Why it matters: The wide range of household types that exist today reflects emerging trends in American society. For example, there are fewer married couples with children and more single-adult households. Different household types may call for different services and may signal future trends or changes in the community.

How the county stacks up: Nearly 75% of the households in Osceola County have no children living in them – though the majority of those have more than one adult.

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2014



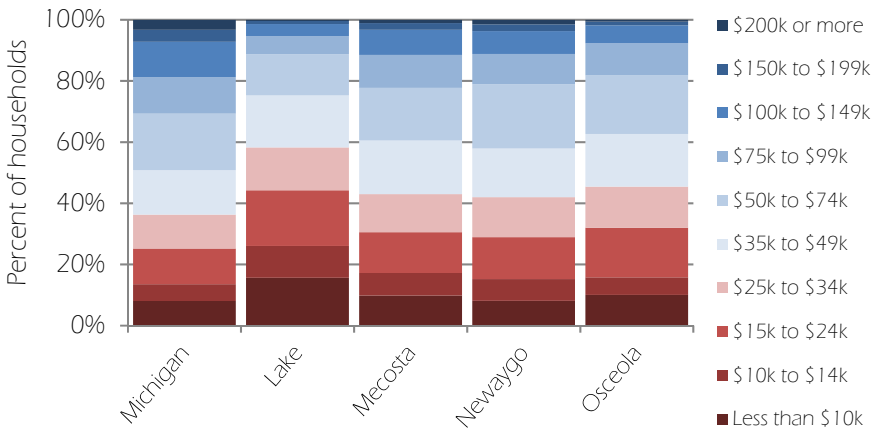
Discussion Questions

1. What one or two things most **surprised** you in this data about who is living in the county?
2. What one trend in this data gives you the most **hope** for the county?
3. What one trend in this data causes you the most **concern** – for any reason?
4. Which fact in this data would you most like to **change** – and why?

4 How are Osceola County's people doing?

Once you understand who lives in a region, you must consider how those people are doing—looking at income, assets, education, and health.

a. Household income distribution



Why it matters: Household income provides a general indicator of well-being of its members. It correlates with health, educational outcomes and happiness.

How the county stacks up: About 46% of households in Osceola County earn less than $35,000 which is 150% of poverty for a household of four. Less than10% of households earned $100,000 or more in 2014.

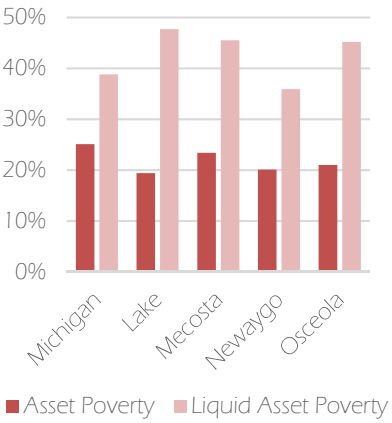
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2014

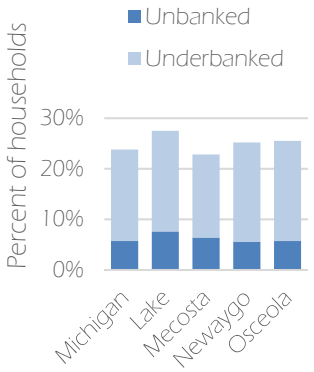
b. Households and assets

Why it matters: New poverty measures assess if households have sufficient resources to subsist at the poverty level for three months without income. Asset poverty is calculated using net worth, while liquid poverty is calculated using liquid assets like cash and stocks. Unbanked households don't have bank accounts, and underbanked households use non-traditional financial tools like payday loans.

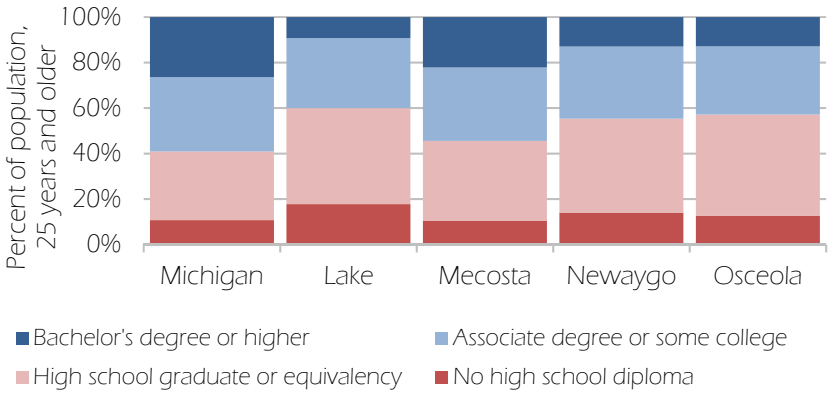
How the county stacks up: More than one-in-five households in Osceola County are asset-poor, 45% are liquid-asset-poor, 6% don't have bank accounts, and 20% use non-traditional financial tools.

Source: CFED, Assets and Opportunity Local Data Center, 2016





c. Educational attainment

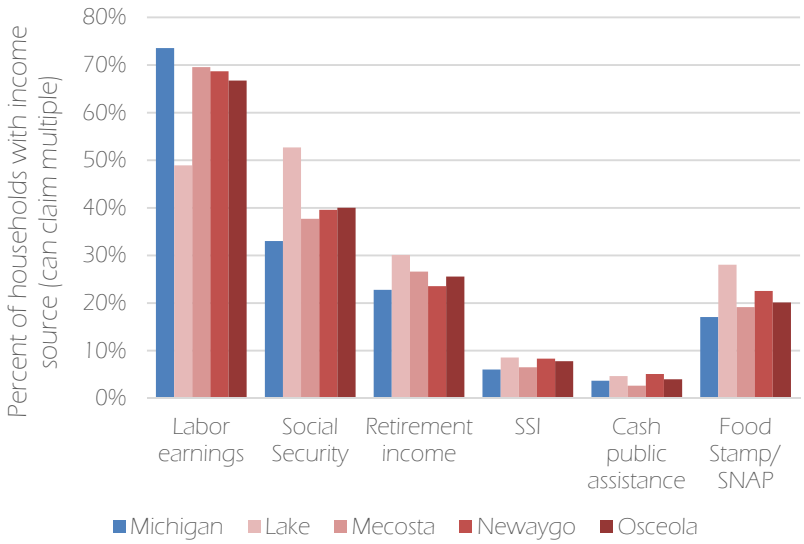


Why it matters: A leading factor shaping any economy is educational attainment. Higher education levels within a community typically result in higher incomes, more wealth formation and even healthier residents.

How the county stacks up: About 57% of residents over 25 have no college coursework or degree beyond high school. Thirteen percent have a bachelor's degree or higher.

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2014

d. Labor and non-labor earnings



Why it matters: Labor earnings include income generated by working. Other forms of income represent retirement income from investments and transfer payments associated with Social Security, farm programs and those receiving help due to illness, insufficient wage income, or unemployment.

How the county stacks up: About 67% of households in Osceola County claim labor earnings, 40% claim Social Security, 26% claim some other form of retirement income, 8% claim Supplemental Security Income, just 4% claim cash public assistance, and 20% participate in SNAP.

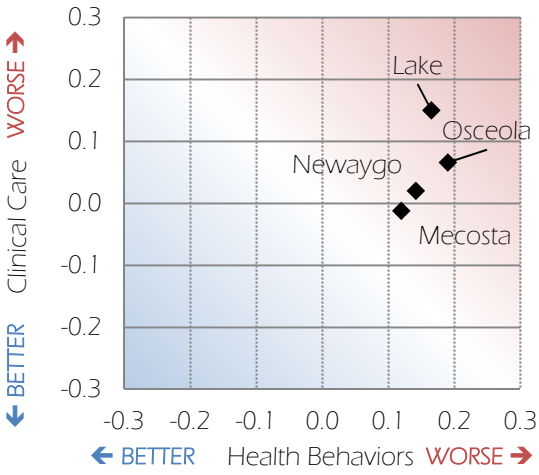
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2014

e. Health Factors

Why it matters: Indicators like health status, happiness and attitude shed light on people's current and future well-being. County Health Rankings and Roadmaps assigns counties a standardized health behavior score (the Michigan average score is 0) taking into account factors such as obesity, smoking and sexually transmitted infection rates. It also assigns a clinical care score including factors such as the ratio of residents to doctors and dentists, and rate of preventative care screenings.

How the county stacks up: Of Michigan's 83 ranked counties, Osceola County ranks 70th for health factors. Most concerning are the county's lack of access to healthy foods, rate of adult obesity, limited access to exercise opportunities, teen birth rate, and access to doctors, dentists and mental health providers.

Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, 2016



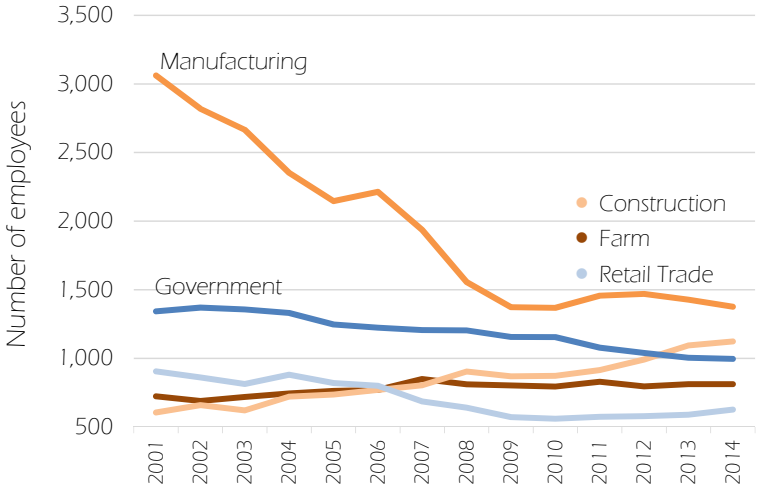
Discussion Questions

1. What one or two things most **surprised** you in this data about how people are doing in the county?
2. What one trend in this data gives you the most **hope** for the county?
3. What one trend in this data causes you the most **concern** – for any reason?
4. Which fact in this data would you most like to **change** – and why?

5 How is Osceola County's economy doing?

The factors that drive or drain a local economy – specific industry sectors, the labor force participation of residents, the sources of the income people spend – all affect the future.

a. Largest employment sectors



Why it matters: Every economy has a unique set of industry sectors. Understanding which sectors drive a local economy is essential to understanding how the region will perform economically in the future.

How the county stacks up: The largest employers in the county include manufacturing, construction, government, farming, and retail trade. There have been significant manufacturing job losses between 2001 and 2014. Government is also losing jobs, while construction has experienced some job growth over the period.

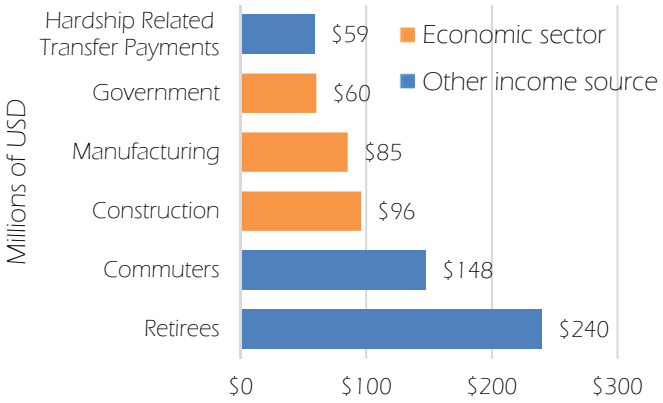
Source: Headwaters Economics, Economic Profile System, 2016

b. Income by source

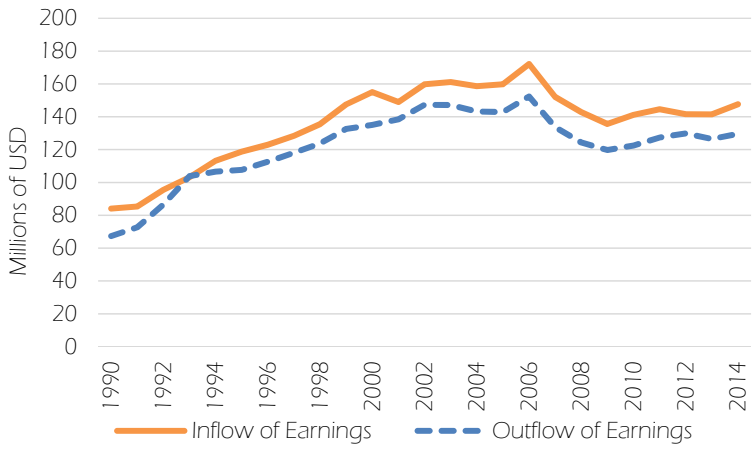
Why it matters: Another way to understand a region's economy is by looking at which sectors produce the most income. Depending on local wages, sectors with relatively few employees can be responsible for a large portion of economic activity.

How the county stacks up: Based on household earnings, the largest economic driver in the county is retirees, followed by commuters, construction, manufacturing, and government (including public schools). Retirees and commuters are non-traditional economic sectors but are key to the county's economic health.

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Accounts, 2015



c. Inflow and outflow of earnings

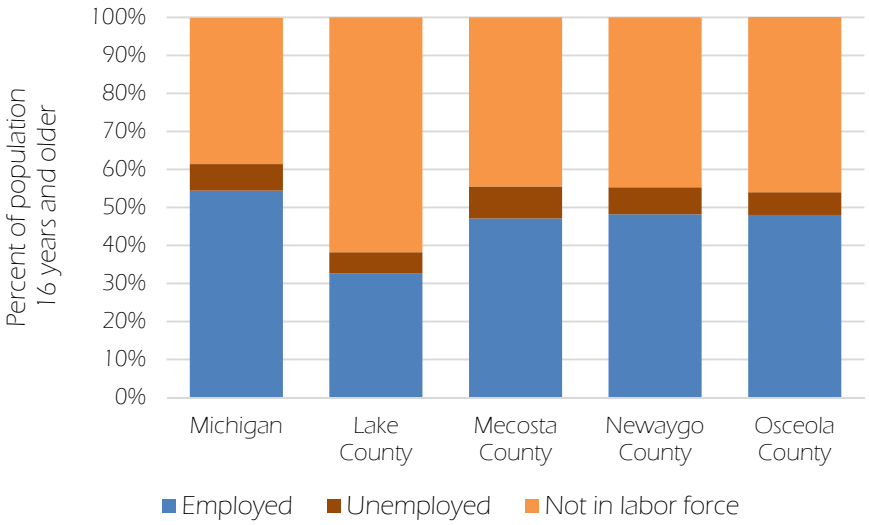


Why it matters: Many Americans commute to work, entertainment and shopping. People who work in Osceola County but live in another county tend to spend more of their paycheck in the county where they live, creating an "outflow of earnings" – and vice versa.

How the county stacks up: Inflow earnings (living in the county and working outside of the county) and outflow earnings (living outside of the county and working in the county) grew substantially between 1990 and the mid-2000s. After 2006, both declined and are now growing once again.

Source: Headwaters Economics, Economic Profile System, 2016

d. Labor force participation



Why it matters: Aging communities and communities experiencing economic distress typically have lower labor force participation rates. Conversely, communities that are growing, younger and doing better economically have higher labor force participation rates and lower unemployment rates.

How the county stacks up: Labor force participation rates in the county are lower when compared to Michigan. A majority of adults are not in the labor force, reflecting an aging society and a growing number of retirees.

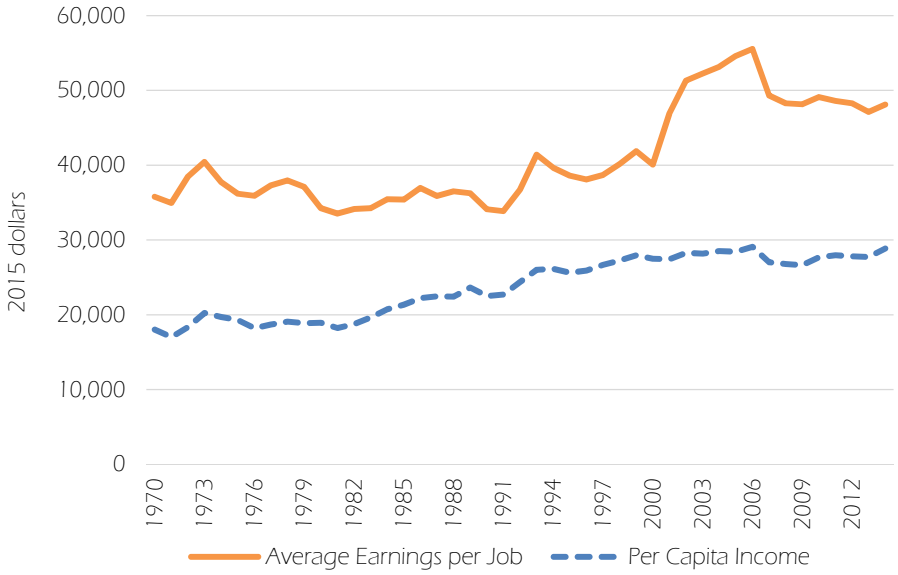
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2014

e. Average earnings and income

Why it matters: Average earnings per job is a measure of the average compensation per job and an indicator of the quality of local employment. Per capita income is a measure of income per person (from all sources) and a measure of economic well-being.

How the county stacks up: Per capita income (total personal income divided by total population) has grown steadily between 1970 and 2014. Average earnings per job grew significantly in the mid-1990s into the mid-2000s and have since declined, reflecting eroding real earnings.

Source: Headwaters Economics, Economic Profile System, 2016



Discussion Questions

1. What one or two things most **surprised** you in this data about how the county's economy is doing?

2. What one trend in this data gives you the most **hope** for the county?

3. What one trend in this data causes you the most **concern** – for any reason?

4. Which fact in this data would you most like to **change** – and why?

6 How is Osceola County, the place, doing?

The natural resources, buildings and amenities in a place, as well as where people live and shop, make a difference in the community's quality of life.

a. Environmental quality

	Air	Water	Land	Built
Lake	13th	11th	7th	57th
Mecosta	46th	59th	36th	36th
Newaygo	37th	4th	21st	4th
Osceola	23rd	47th	16th	39th

Rankings out of MI's 83 counties – #1 is best; #83 is worst

Why it matters: The Environmental Quality Index (assessed from 2000-2005) provides counties a way to gauge their long-term environmental wellbeing and to understand its influence on the quality of life for residents. Here we include four domains from the index: air (air quality data and measures of toxins), water (contaminant incidents, drought, tap water quality), land (pesticides, brownfields), and built (housing quality, recreational opportunities, road distance).

How the county stacks up: Osceola County's strongest performance in the Environmental Quality Index is in measures of land and air quality. Water quality ranks lowest.

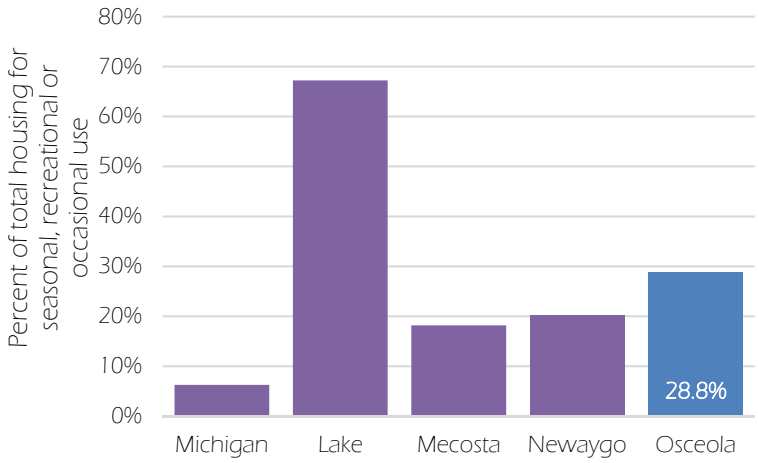
Source: Environmental Protection Agency, Environmental Quality Index, 2013

b. Seasonal homes

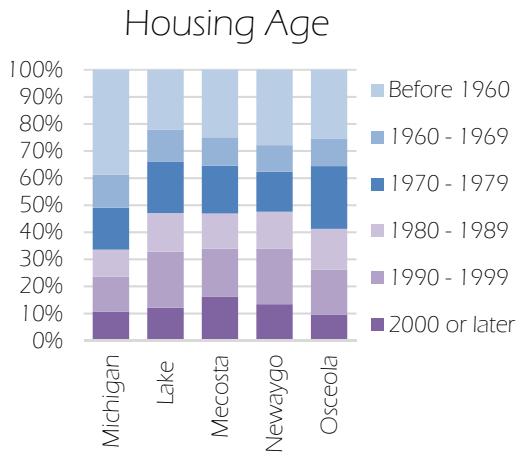
Why it matters: This region of Michigan is home to a wonderful mix of natural resources including rivers, lakes and forests. For years, it has been a desirable seasonal home location for people from outside the region. During certain seasons, large number of visitors take up residence in seasonal homes, greatly expanding the county's population base and economic activity.

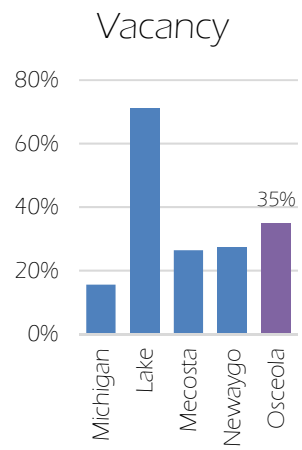
How the county stacks up: Nearly one in three of Osceola County's housing units are classified as seasonal housing units. During warmer months, these units fill as visitors take advantage of the county's natural resource amenities.

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2014



c. Housing age and vacancy



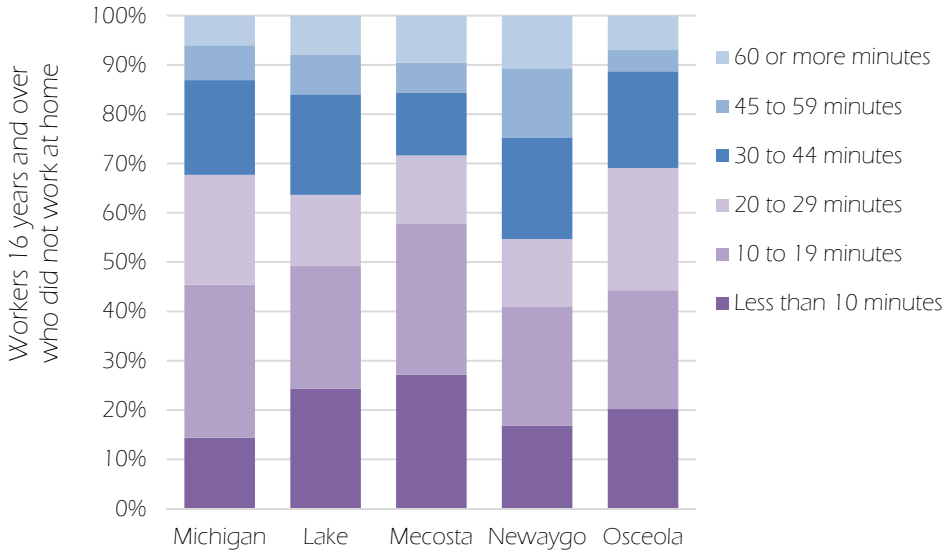


Why it matters: Housing age and vacancy are rough measures of housing quality and housing costs – older homes require more upkeep, and vacant homes can deteriorate and reduce housing value. Alternatively, very low vacancy rates can be a sign of housing shortages and an affordability crisis.

How the county stacks up: The housing stock in the county is older when compared to the other counties in the region. Osceola County's housing vacancy rate is 35%, likely reflecting the high number of seasonal homes.

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2014

d. Commuting to work



Why it matters: Many Americans commute to work, entertainment and shopping. Commuting might mean more access to jobs. It can also be a sign that economic activity is occurring elsewhere, taking dollars and resources to a neighboring community.

How the county stacks up: Commute-to-work times in the county are relatively short, with most workers travelling less than 30 minutes each day – though 30% of workers also commute more than 30 minutes daily.

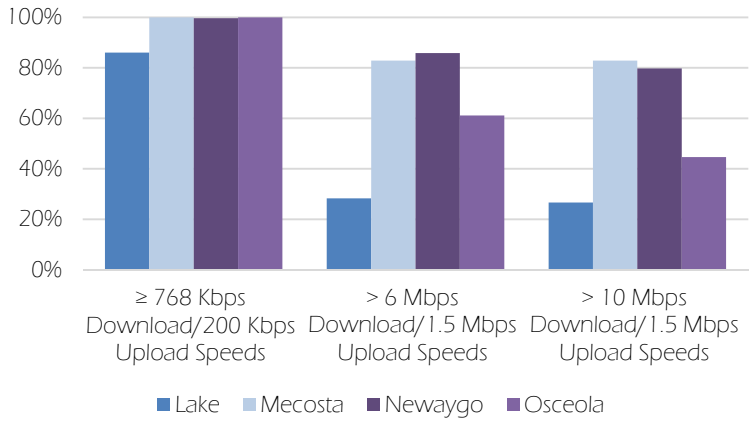
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2014

e. Broadband access

Why it matters: Broadband access is increasing across the United States, but many rural areas are being left behind. According to the Council of Economic Advisors, broadband has many socio-economic benefits including improved labor market outcomes, increased growth, better health care and enhanced civic participation.

How the county stacks up: According to telecommunications industry data, fewer than half of the county's households have access to download speeds greater than 10 Mbps and upload speeds greater than 1.5 Mbps.

Source: Connect Michigan (telecommunications industry), 2016



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Overall Priority Questions: Looking Forward

This Assessment is offered as a conversation opener – a tool that can help open a discussion about what is good and what is challenging today in the area, and what we want to work on to make a better future for our people, economy and place.

You may review this by yourself, or work with a local group or set of neighbors to answer the questions at the end of each of the six sections in the Assessment. Having done that, we recommend one final reflection.

Thinking across all six sections of this Assessment, and taking into account all your insights when you reviewed them, answer these final two Overall Priority questions:

1. What does this data – and your reflections – suggest should be the area's top two or three priorities for action over the next five years?
2. For each priority you listed, what other information or deeper data do you think would be very useful or critical to know before exploring and choosing a good strategy to address that priority?

Osceola County Community Foundation

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