

FACTS & FACES:

Food Hardship in Hamden

2019

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Christ the Bread of Life Parish

Community Alliance for Research and Engagement

Connecticut Food Bank

Davenport-Dunbar Home Pantry

FISH of Greater New Haven

Hamden Public Schools and Students

Hamden Community Members

FoodCorps

Food Rescue US

ML Keefe Community Center

New Haven Public Schools, Food Services Division - Central Kitchen

Quinnipiac Valley Health District

Quinnipiac University and Students

Southern Connecticut State University

Town of Hamden

United Way of Greater New Haven

Yale School of Public Health

Preface

Putting food on the table can be a challenge for struggling households in Hamden. Food hardship is more widespread in our community than many of us realize and disproportionately affects our most vulnerable residents – children, seniors, new immigrants, and those who are differently abled.

We know that improving access to healthy, affordable food works best when communities develop their own solutions based on local knowledge, resources, and needs. To this end, a task force formed in Hamden in the fall of 2017 to engage community members, service providers, and multiple partners in a new conversation.

This task force has worked for over a year, taking prompt steps to make sure that more healthy food has been immediately available for children and families, while at the same time exploring long-term solutions and mobilizing additional resources to put food on the table for struggling community members. Our goals are: making sure more children have healthy food to succeed at school, putting families on a secure financial footing, and addressing food hardship and ending hunger in Hamden.

In order to develop longer-term solutions that work locally, we first needed to understand the situation. This is why we gathered information on food hardship through many sources including community dinners, surveying school administrators and parents, and talking directly to those using available food supports. This report details the problem in Hamden, using data and anecdotal evidence from those experienced with and experiencing food hardship.

While data points are important, they are not the full story. As part of our effort to change the narrative of food hardship in Hamden, we have begun collecting stories and photos that move beyond facts to the faces of those affected. Alongside this work, several local partners are endeavoring to ensure that the voices of residents affected by these issues are heard and engaged in developing and applying solutions to test what works best.

All these residents and partners in the Hamden community are working together because the changing face of hunger requires solutions that are community-

tailored and focused. We need to consider all factors that influence the availability, cost, and quality of healthy food access for residents in Hamden, particularly those struggling to provide food for their households. And we need to work differently to develop solutions that address the many aspects of this problem.

By working in this different way, we can improve lives and create a stronger community for all of us. We know this approach works. We invite you to be a part of the solution. Read on to find out just how you can be engaged in this vibrant project in our community to eliminate hunger and food hardship.



Jennifer Heath
President and CEO
United Way
of Greater New Haven



Jody Goeler
Superintendent
of Schools
Hamden Public Schools



Curt Balzano Leng
Mayor
Town of Hamden

Introduction

The Hamden Food Security Task Force grew out of the work of a number of service providers concerned with the increase in food hardship¹ and the dearth of powerful and enduring solutions in communities in the Greater New Haven area. Hamden was chosen as an important place to begin the process of finding solutions to this intractable problem because, as a suburban community, the data and provider experience showed that the problem was much greater than most people understood. Bordering on New Haven, which attracts the lion's share of funding and resources for food programs, Hamden has significantly fewer resources to address residents' food hardship. Additionally, the Superintendent of Schools showed overwhelming support for this initiative which brought access to a sizeable universe of teachers, families and others, along with a key community partnership.

An initial group, led by United Way of Greater New Haven, the Town of Hamden, and Hamden Public Schools, and composed of school principals and those working with families in the schools, the superintendent, staff from United Way and Connecticut Food Bank, and other service providers in the community met to discuss building a wider table to examine food security in Hamden and craft solutions. This kicked off a year-long process led by a rapidly growing Task Force, which realized a number of projects including the genesis of this report.

Food hardship and hunger affect many of our neighbors in Hamden. They may even affect you. *Food hardship* is when people have trouble meeting their household's basic food needs and when their access to food is barely adequate, inevitably putting them at risk for hunger. Neighbors in our community with food hardship are unable to buy healthy food and, more seriously, are at risk of or may actually be going without food. Lack of food affects nearly every aspect of their

The implications of food hardship in Hamden are that residents and their children end up suffering from preventable disease and children are hampered in their growth, health, and life prospects.

¹We use food hardship rather than food insecurity in this report to more evocatively describe what people are facing when they struggle to put food on the table for themselves and their families. Food insecurity is defined in the U.S. government's Healthy People 2020 report as the disruption of food intake or eating patterns because of lack of money and other resources. Food insecurity does not necessarily cause hunger, but hunger is a possible outcome of food insecurity.

lives including their physical health and, for children, their ability to concentrate in school, thus impacting their lifelong abilities and futures. Distressingly, this problem impacts the most vulnerable members of our community most—children, seniors, the differently abled, and those who are sick are all acutely affected by limited access to fresh, healthy foods.

It is hard to determine how common food hardship and hunger are in any community as the issue is often masked by access to food of inferior quality and nutrition and because of the stigma associated with it. Given that calories are often mistaken for good nutrition, food insecurity is challenging to measure since it may not look like typical malnutrition. Many Hamden residents do not realize the pervasiveness and extent of food hardship and hunger in their own neighborhoods. This report provides a deeper look into the facts and faces of this problem in Hamden.

The opportunity this initiative presents is crafting customized solutions at the local level to meet the very specific needs of children, working parents, and people facing high barriers to economic and social stability, both of which are powerful drivers for food hardship. The report highlights some fast tracked ideas, projects, and innovations that the Task Force and others are collaborating on to address this problem.

Importantly, the Task Force identified four key priorities to focus efforts on in 2019:

- 1. Improve access to healthy food** for all community members and specifically those in need and with limited healthy food options.
- 2. Support families so that they have enduring access to free, affordable, and sustainable healthy food for their children and households** including expanding access to school meals and building on the summer anti-hunger work.
- 3. Grow the Hamden Food Security Task Force and develop a Food Policy Council²** in order to create sustainable solutions, better streamline the emergency food system, and engage more community members.
- 4. Inform the Qualified Opportunity Zone (QOZ)** to ensure that it addresses the need for access to healthy food and living wage jobs and considers social justice and equity issues as vital considerations during zone development.

We invite you to join these efforts. There are a number of ways you can get immediately involved and make a difference:

- 1. Join the Food Security Task Force** or one of the working groups. Our group needs new membership and partners to develop new ideas and collaborate to get food-related projects done.
- 2. Spread the word** – pass this report or its summary located at uwgnh.org/HamdenHunger
- 3. Stay up-to-date and follow progress** on social media
- 4. Volunteer** at a local food pantry or soup kitchen
- 5. Donate** funds to support local food programs

²Local Food Policy Councils (FPC's) are often a component of local government featuring a collaboration between diverse stakeholders from across the food system and government officials aimed at addressing issues like hunger, food hardship, health, the environment and the economy.

Food Hardship: Trends in Hamden

What is happening in Hamden reflects broader changes across Connecticut communities and the U.S. in general. Between 2000 and 2011, the number of poor residents in America's suburbs grew by 64 percent, more than twice that of core cities.³ The suburbs have increasingly become home to higher numbers of new immigrants and households supported on low-wage jobs.⁴ This suburban poverty has been on the rise for some time and studies show that it is not just temporarily caused by the economic downturn since 2008. The drivers are complex: shifts in immigration patterns; lack of and deteriorating affordable housing; increases in low-paying jobs; distance between where jobs are and where low-income workers can afford to live; and lack of transportation connecting residents to work.⁵

The effects of the economic downturn and the collapse of the housing market over the past decade are still being roundly felt in towns across the country. The burden of federal and state cuts has fallen heavily on places like Hamden. Towns in Connecticut are particularly hard hit because the State has posted two consecutive years of deficit budgets. The resulting pressure from State finances has pushed its way deep into local budgets. This year, Hamden's budget saw a tax increase and reduction in services as a result of drastic state budget cuts, equaling approximately \$4 million. This prompted Hamden Mayor Curt Balzano Leng to call it "the most challenging budget in his 20 years of public service."⁶

Troublingly, the indicators for the state crisis suggest declining finances for a generation to come. In tandem with the broader economic and demographic shifts, this suggests that the problems outlined in this report will deepen, affecting our most vulnerable residents even more.

³Alan Berube and Elizabeth Kneebone. America's Shifting Suburban Battlegrounds Brookings August 16, 2013

⁴Elizabeth Kneebone. Suburban poverty is missing from the conversation about America's future. Brookings September 15, 2016

⁵Ibid

⁶Tax Increase Proposed In 'Challenging' Hamden Budget: Mayor Curt Balzano Leng recently presented his recommended budget for fiscal year 2018-19 to the Legislative Council. Vincent Salzo, Patch Staff Mar 19, 2018 <https://patch.com/connecticut/hamden/tax-increase-proposed-challenging-hamden-budget>

Wealth and Income Polarization:⁷ Another phenomenon occurring in Hamden, as well as throughout the state and the country, is wealth and income polarization. According to the Brookings Institution, income inequality in the Greater New Haven Region is amongst the highest in the country.⁸ From 2006 to 2012, the gap between the region's rich and poor expanded at a rate three times faster than the national average and much faster than statewide growth in income disparity.⁹ Labor force, income, and wealth data all suggest that Hamden, as well as the rest of the country, is experiencing a growing gap in wealth and income between high and low income residents.

Hamden has led the area in labor force growth and has a consistently lower unemployment rate compared to the state as a whole.¹⁰ However, income growth, as measured by changes in median household income, remains low in some neighborhoods, while others demonstrate reliable growth (Figure 1). The signs of persistent low income among large portions of the Hamden population suggest challenging obstacles to robust economic growth for everyone.

Many Hamden households have not experienced the same trends as other suburbs in the U.S. In Hamden, the economic expansion evident in some parts of the U.S. has left many households behind. There is no clear progression of how wages and incomes vary across the town. There is also no obvious geographical division that provides an easy explanation of why, or how, the wealth and income polarization within Hamden is occurring. There are concentrations of poverty in a few neighborhoods but some data, anecdotal evidence, and provider experience suggests that food hardship and financial struggles can be found throughout all of Hamden.

Exacerbating these trends, Connecticut is an expensive place to live, and many people find themselves forced to choose between buying food or paying for basic needs, such as heat, electricity, or rent. Wages, also, have not kept up with

⁷Unless otherwise noted, much of the data cited in this section has been summarized from an analysis of poverty and income for the Town of Hamden by Ethan Carilli, Quinnipiac University Fellow, 2018.

⁸Alan Berube. City and metropolitan income inequality data reveal ups and downs through 2016. Brookings February 5 2018

⁹U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (1999, 2016)

¹⁰Private correspondence referencing research on trends in labor and income by Dan Smolnik

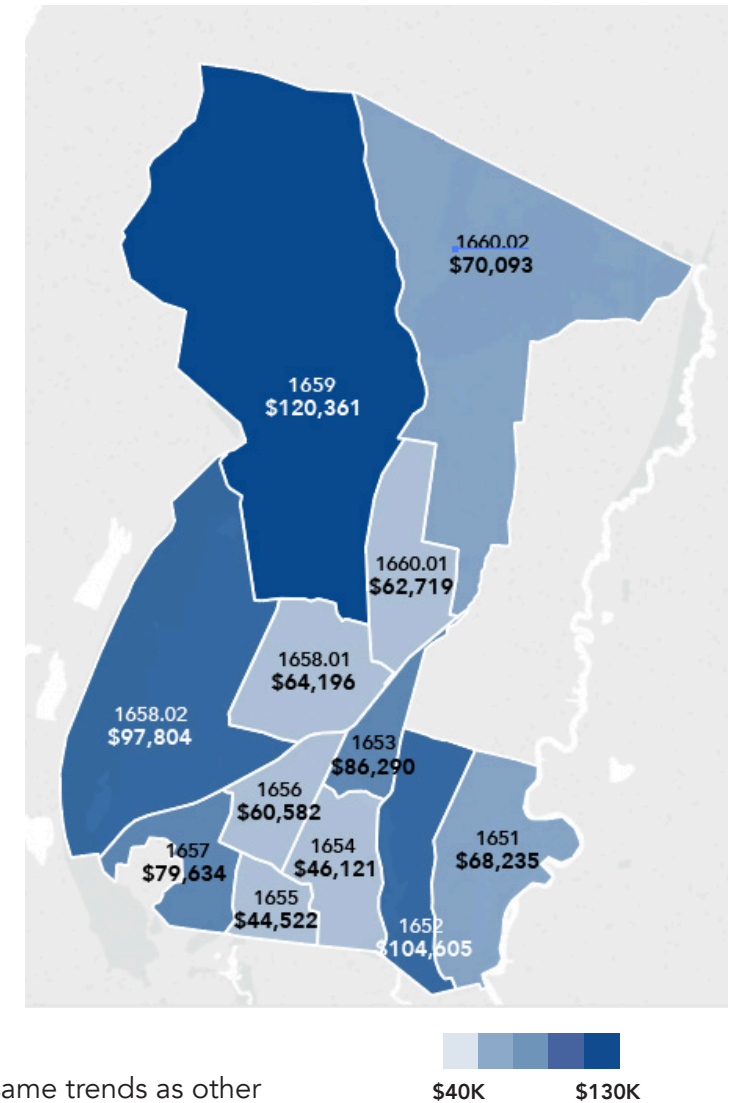


Figure 1: 2016 Income by Census Tract,

increases in the basic costs of living.¹¹ For those in poverty, the federal poverty level is so low as to make life extremely difficult even for families with benefits. Furthermore, struggling households in Hamden have fewer services to access compared to New Haven, which, historically, attracts more funding and resources due to more obvious and deeper issues. This means that poor and working families have fewer supports to help maintain financial stability, employment, and health.

In Hamden, families with children and the working poor are increasingly experiencing food hardship as a constant factor in their lives. Many contributing factors are effectively invisible, not only to government, but also to the community. For example, undocumented immigrants, persons experiencing disabilities, English language learners, along with people whose cultural or personal views inhibit them from bringing their food hardship to the attention or accessing available services.

Table 1: 2018 Federal Poverty Guidelines

Household Size	100%	200%
1	\$12,140	24,280
2	\$16,460	32,920
3	\$20,780	\$41,560

The Face of Hunger Has Changed

Many Working Families Struggle Financially

While the challenges of access to food are somewhat understood at the national level thanks to the work of many national groups like FRAC (Food Research and Action Center), Feeding America, and Share Our Strength, the problem is less well understood in local communities. For many people, the thought of children or families experiencing hunger is visceral and they understand that in parts of the country some residents really struggle. However, in their own community, people may not understand that this story is playing out right next door or down the street. The face of someone missing a meal or having difficulty putting food on the table could be the person living next door.

According to an analysis by the Brookings Institute, "Local leaders and residents often don't know the extent to which poverty has grown in their communities, or fully understand the complex challenges facing new arrivals and long-time suburban residents who make up the growing poor population."¹²

Many ALICE households are one emergency away from a financial crisis impacting their ability to feed their family, heat their home, maintain their housing, and ensure their medical care.

Connecticut United Ways' third report on ALICE¹³, published in 2018, shows the hardships that working families, young people, and aging adults face every day.¹⁴ ALICE represents the growing number of individuals and families who work but are unable to afford basic necessities such as housing, food, child care, health care, and transportation. **In Hamden, ALICE and people in poverty represent 39% of the population.**¹⁵

¹¹Cost of living is increasingly out of reach for low-wage workers. Fred Imbert CNBC Aug 31 2015. Accessed on Apr 5 2019. <https://www.cnbc.com/2015/08/31/cost-of-living-is-increasingly-out-of-reach-for-low-wage-workers.html>

¹²Elizabeth Kneebone and Alan Berube Suburban Poverty: A Year of Lessons. Brookings The Avenue, May 20, 2014

¹³ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed

¹⁴ALICE: A Study of Financial Hardship Connecticut. 2018 Report. Connecticut United

¹⁵United Way of Greater New Haven ALICE. Accessed online https://alice.ctunitedway.org/meet_alice/uwgnh/. 21Sep18

Due to low wages, tight budgets, and almost no savings, working families are often faced with tough choices: pay the rent or put food on the table, fill the car with gas or pay for a child's school lunch. These struggles are often not apparent to a bystander when they see people with cars and mobile phones which might be thought of as luxuries but are essentials to access jobs and services today. Additionally, nice clothes are available cheaply and allow struggling neighbors to present a different affect than their financial struggles might suggest.

The 2018 ALICE report identifies new trends that are impacting working people's ability to build assets and achieve financial security including: few occupations support working people's ability to earn enough to survive in the state; an increase in on-demand and project-to-project jobs provide limited job security, few or no benefits, and unreliable wages and hours; and advances in technology replace some existing jobs.¹⁶ Troublingly, 48% of all Connecticut households do not have enough savings to cover three months of expenses in an emergency.¹⁷

Wearing nice clothes is a defense mechanism. People wear nicer clothes or take care to look well so that they aren't talked about. You don't want to show your great burden on the outside. If I look well you can't see my stomach is grumbling on the inside.

Daquan Stuckey

Impact of Food Hardship on Hamden Residents

All these factors combine to put a new face on who is struggling to put food on the table, so different from current stereotypes based on the past. Today, it is not unusual to find people working two jobs spanning more than full-time hours who still need to "shop" at food pantries. Working parents are scouring newspapers for coupons and trekking to supermarkets to scoop foods on sale. "If pasta is ten for a dollar, then I'm taking the bus across town and that is what my family eats for the month," one mother shared.

Many of our struggling neighbors are invisible and food hardship affects residents in all neighborhoods. **Unless you go to one of the food pantries, churches, or other food assistance providers in the community, you are most likely not aware of just how pervasive this problem is.** These neighbors are invisible in regular data counts like the census because this information is not collected. We have no exact assessment of the extent of the problem in Hamden. However, this report has used existing data and supporting anecdotal evidence to estimate and describe what this challenge looks like in Hamden.

Poverty and the associated lack of food that accompanies it have been shown to impact health. Those living in poverty have worse health outcomes compared to those who not living in poverty.¹⁸ Food hardship is a social determinant of health and is associated with some of the most serious and costly health problems in our nation such as increased rates of diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, heart disease and even low birth weight.¹⁹ The impact of lack of food is further aggravated in neighborhoods with fewer stores offering nutritious food and parks and recreational areas to encourage physical exercise. Furthermore, these neighborhoods can have more health harming environmental threats like poor housing, air, and water quality.²⁰

¹⁸The Impact of Poverty, Food Insecurity, and Poor Nutrition on Health and Well-Being. FRAC Accessed on 16Sep18 <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/hunger-health-impact-poverty-food-insecurity-health-well-being.pdf>

¹⁹Ibid

²⁰Ibid

¹⁶Ibid

¹⁷Ibid

Alarming, children in low income households are more likely to experience food insecurity, obesity, exposure to tobacco and lead, poor oral health, asthma, and a host of other developmental risks.²¹ A lack of nutritious, steady food itself is associated with learning disabilities, poor academic outcomes, and behavioral and emotional problems.

For Hamden residents, who may not be “poor” by official standards but who still struggle to put food on the table, lack of food — specifically nutritious food — has negative implications for their health. In addition to the enormous stress placed on families and individuals struggling to make ends meet, these neighbors are at risk for much higher rates of obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, poor oral health, and a host of other health delimiting factors. According to the Quinnipiack Valley Health District Community Health Assessment (2017), 13% of respondents in Hamden reported being told they had diabetes by their doctor, which is also the third leading cause of death in the area. Interviews with residents reported that obesity was the fourth most important issue in the community.²²

In short, poor health outcomes are driven by a combination of inadequate nutrition and other factors. Aggravated by stress, the time and money needed to care for a possible existing illness further constrains budgets making life and good health extremely difficult to maintain or achieve. The practical implications for Hamden are that residents and their children end up suffering from preventable disease and children are hampered in their growth, health, and life prospects. These impacts also have consequences for the town’s schools, social services, and health providers driving up the costs required to address these needs.



Understanding the Problem: Demographics and Data

Data exist to help us map and understand the food related issues that community members face in Hamden. Stories add to the data, showing the extent of the problem and how residents’ lives and health are impacted by the challenges of food hardship. Stories also illustrate the invisibility of the problem and underline how much more pervasive the issue is across the community than is commonly acknowledged.

Sociodemographic Facts

As the 11th largest town in Connecticut with a population of 60,960, Hamden is approximately 33 square miles.²³ The town abuts New Haven, which, due to its larger population and more complex issues, has been much more profoundly resourced for services for needy families and individuals over the years. Hamden’s median income is \$74,281 with the top 20.0% of households at \$131,000 and the bottom 20.0% at \$28,000.²⁴ This median income is marginally higher than the Connecticut average of \$74,781.²⁵ Poverty affects 8.4% of residents, compared to a state average of 10.3% (Table 2). However, this rate varies depending on neighborhood, with some communities experiencing rates as high as 15.5% (Table 2).

As Figure 2 illustrates, moving south in Hamden, household incomes decrease and poverty increases dramatically. Of the 12 Census tracts in Hamden, four southern tracts have the highest poverty rates (Figure 2):

- Tract 1654 – 8.6%
- Tract 1655 – 15.5%
- Tract 1656 – 13.0%
- Tract 1657 – 8.9%

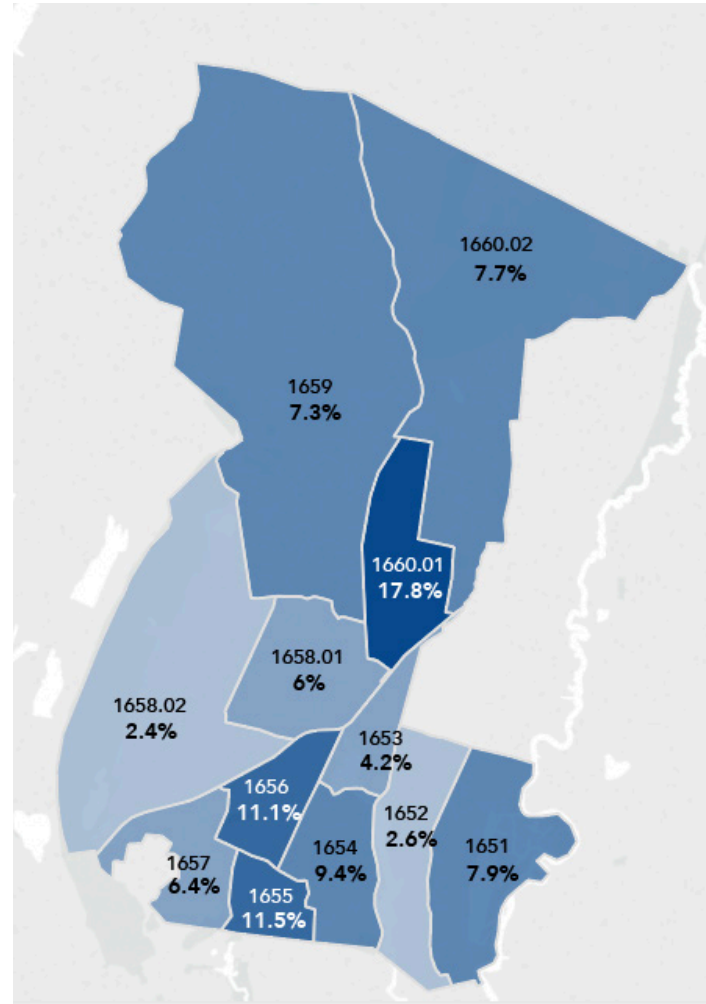
²³Hamden, Connecticut CERC Town Profile 2017. The CT Data Collaborative. Accessed 16Sep81 <http://hamden-ct.com/images/customer-files/hamden-2017.pdf>

²⁴Hamden, Key Facts. DataHaven. Accessed 16 Apr 2019 <https://ctdatahaven.org/profiles/hamden>

²⁵Ibid.

²¹Ibid

²²Quinnipiack Valley Health District Community Health Assessment, 2017



Poverty in Hamden

- **Highest for any demographic**
Unemployed females at 40.6%
- **Females compared to males**
10.0% versus 6.6%
- **Highest amongst age groups**
19 to 34 year olds at 11.7%
- Census tract 1655 and 1657 have 80.3% and 57.0% non-White residents which also represent the highest prevalence for poverty (Figure 2)

Tellingly, median household income ranges from \$122,222 in the north to \$44,518 in the south. An entire Census tract (1655) in South Hamden²⁶ has average household incomes below the poverty level with the lowest median household income (\$44,518) and highest poverty rate in Hamden (15.5%) (Table 2). From 1999 to 2016, this tract experienced very little income growth and households currently have \$30,000 less than the state median income. Low income individuals cannot fully cover the cost of necessities, such as food, housing, and transportation. 18% of households in Hamden reported severe housing cost-burden i.e. spending more than 50% of income on housing.²⁷

²⁶Census Tract 1655 includes the area south of Putnam Street and north of Goodrich Street. Newhall Street is its eastern border and the tract includes the area slightly west of Dixwell Avenue.

²⁷This section is adapted from an analysis of poverty and income for the Town of Hamden by Ethan Carilli, Quinnipiac University Fellow, 2018 referencing U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2016)

Table 2: Poverty Status by Census Tract and Year²⁸

Tract	1999	2009	2012	2016	% Rate Increase 2012-2016
State	7.9%	8.7%	10.0%	10.3%	24.0%
Town	7.8%	7.5%	7.8%	8.4%	7.7%
1651	10.6%	10.2%	4.8%	8.1%	-23.0%
1652	2.6%	4.7%	2.1%	3.2%	23.1%
1653	1.8%	3.5%	7.5%	2.7%	50.0%
1654	6.7%	3.8%	4.7%	8.6%	28.4%
1655	14.6%	17.5%	17.4%	15.5%	6.2%
1656	10.1%	9.2%	6.7%	13.0%	28.7%
1657	8.1%	5%	5.1%	8.9%	9.9%
1658.01	10.8%	18.9%	15.9%	6.0%	-44.4%
1658.02	3.6%	0.5%	2.3%	1.6%	-55.6%
1659	2.9%	2.8%	2.2%	8.0%	175.9%
1660.01	11.4%	7.9%	14.7%	13.7%	20.2%
1660.02	6.5%	2.6%	3.3%	3.3%	-49.2%

Income Disparity

Data shows an increasing disparity between the wealthiest and poorest areas in town. In 1999 the gap between the Census tracts with the highest and lowest household incomes was \$41,945 compared to \$77,704 in 2016.²⁹ From 2010 to 2014, low income individuals earning less than twice the federal poverty level increased from 17% to 22%. Troublingly, low income individuals younger than 17 years increased from 19% to 25%.

Growing Diversity

Hamden's total population grew by over 4,000 or 7% in the ten years leading up to 2010 (Table 3). This growth includes rising diversity within the town with growth in all recorded racial groups: African Americans increased by 4.7% to 20.2% of the population, while Asians increased by 2.0% to 5.5%, and Hispanics increased

The polarization you see is evidenced by data showing the slow disappearance of middle-class areas, as most of our region's neighborhoods become either relatively wealthy, or relatively poor.

Mark Abraham
Executive Director, DataHaven

²⁸U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (1999, 2009, 2012, 2016)

²⁹U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (1999, 2009, 2012, 2016)

by 4.4% to comprise 5.5%. As of 2010, 10.7% (6,431) of Hamden residents were foreign-born.³⁰ The increase in diversity is perhaps best reflected in the public schools where 62.6% of children were non-White (Table 4).³¹

Table 3: Hamden’s Population and Increasing Diversity³²

Category	2000 Census	2010 Census
Total population	56,913	60,960
African American	8,840 (15.5%)	12,307 (20.2%)
Asian	2,007 (3.5%)	3,332 (5.5%)
White	43,996 (77.3%)	41,728 (68.5%)
Hispanic/Latino	2,425 (4.3%)	5,327 (8.7%)
Households with children under 18	6,461 (28.8%)	6,014 (25.3%)
Single-Parent households – Female headed households only	1,243 (5.5%)	1,569 (6.5%)

Table 4: School district level diversity data

Measure	2016-2017
English Language Learners	6.8%
Asian	8.1%
African American	29.1%
Hispanic/Latino	19.8%
White	37.4%
Two or more races	5.4%

Single parent households led by women also increased by 1.0% to represent 6.5% of the population. Increases in the single parent population suggest that Hamden’s most vulnerable residents are on the rise. This implies an increased need for additional support services including access to healthy food.

³⁰US Census data accessed, 10 Dec 2018. https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

³¹Hamden District Profile and Performance Report 2017-2018. Connecticut State Department of Education. Accessed online 5 Apr 2019 http://edsight.ct.gov/Output/District/HighSchool/0620011_201718.pdf

³²US Census data accessed, 10 Dec 2018. https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

Home Ownership, Redlining, and It’s Legacy for Food Hardship³³

As of 2017, homeownership for Hamden residents is marginally less than the state at 64.9% versus 66.6%.³⁴ Historic redlining, which was based on the assumption that predominantly immigrant or minority based neighborhoods were areas of high-risk for home loans, has contributed to the poverty that we see today in certain areas of Hamden. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, lenders issued subprime and high-cost mortgages to incentivize revenue and homeownership. Many of the neighborhoods that were marked as undesirable through redlining were targeted by these loans. These practices have created a de facto racial segregation in the town.

The areas that consisted predominantly of immigrant and racial minorities in 1937 have not changed. When comparing areas on map (screenshot) to current poverty data, a correlation indicates that the negative effects of “redlining” can still be seen today. Areas marked “A” (best) and “B” (still desirable) are predominantly White areas. In comparison, areas marked “C” (definitely declining) are predominantly Black and Latino areas.

In 2006, before the stock market crash, Newhall, one of the areas marked “C” in the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation maps, had one of the highest concentration of predatory home purchase loans. Lower income areas in the region were hit hardest by the 2008 foreclosure crisis and ensuing recession and have yet to recover. These data underscore the structural realities underpinning poverty and food insecurity and suggests some of the structural barriers to solutions.

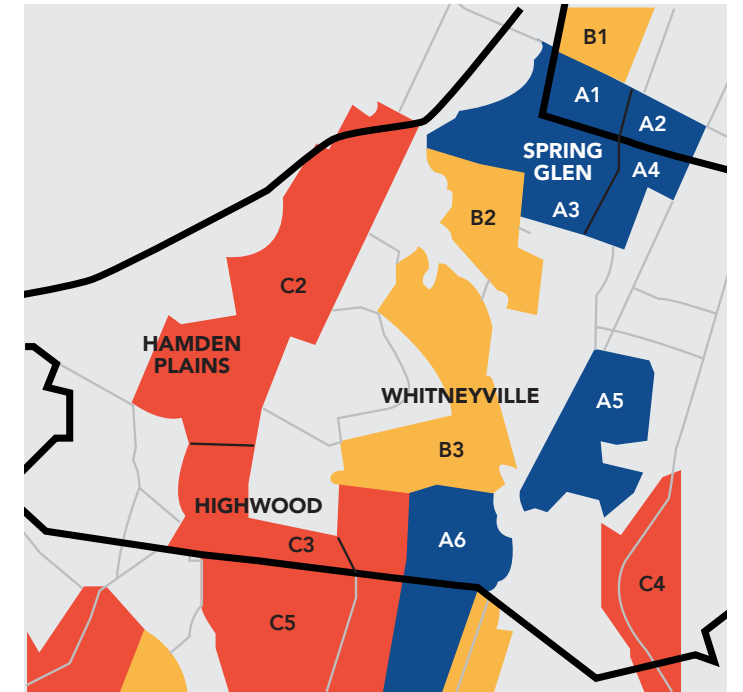
Food Insecurity Data

Presently, 12% of Hamden residents experience food insecurity.³⁵ The 2018 DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey shows disparities by gender, race/ethnicity, and education level in food hardship for residents. Across Hamden, women were more likely to report food insecurity – 14% of women

³³Adapted from an analysis of poverty and income for the Town of Hamden by Ethan Carilli, Quinnipiac University Fellow, 2018 citing “Connecticut Data Story: Housing Segregation in Greater New Haven.” DataHaven. May 05, 2018

³⁴Hamden, Key Facts. DataHaven. Accessed 16 Apr 2019 <https://ctdatahaven.org/profiles/hamden>

³⁵Hunger in Connecticut. Connecticut Food Bank. Accessed 10 Dec 18 <http://www.ctfoodbank.org/about-us/hunger-in-connecticut/>



Adopted from *Mapping Inequality* with profile of South Hamden Neighborhoods, 2018

- = A “Best”
- = B “Still Desirable”
- = C “Definitely Declining”

compared to 9% of men. Food insecurity was higher among Black, Hispanic, and residents of other races compared to Whites (19% versus 8%), and higher among those who do not have a degree beyond high school compared to those with a Bachelor's degree or higher (18% vs 4%).³⁶

Students, Children, and Youth

As shown in Table 4, in recent years, the portion of school students in Hamden eligible for a free or reduced price lunch has been growing dramatically, which contrasts sharply with the decline seen for eligible students in New Haven County and in the State of Connecticut. Compared to 36% of students statewide, 42% (2,301) of students in the Hamden school district are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.³⁷ In some Hamden elementary schools, more than 79% of the students are eligible and, in others, fewer than 15% of students are eligible (Table 5). Eligibility is 44.0% and 40.5% at the middle school and high school, respectively (Table 5).

End Hunger Connecticut, in its 2018 School Breakfast Report Card, reports that only 50.8% of those eligible for FRPL in Hamden participated in the breakfast program compared to 56.7% nationally.³⁸

Table 5: Percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals by school in Hamden 2016-2017³⁹

	N	Total N	% of School/District
District Wide	2301	5493	41.9%
Bear Path	73	445	16.4%
Church Street	253	319	79.3%
Dunbar	144	299	48.2%
Helen Street	237	347	68.3%
Ridge Hill	181	336	53.9%
Shepherd Glen School	192	321	59.8%
Spring Glen	86	432	19.9%
West Woods	55	372	14.8%
Middle School	357	812	44.0%
High School	630	1557	40.5%

³⁶2018 DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey Hamden Crosstabs. DataHaven. Accessed 16 Apr 19 <https://ctdatahaven.org/data-resources/2018-hamden-ct-data-crosstabs-datahaven-community-wellbeing-survey>

³⁷Key Facts Hamden. DataHaven. Accessed 10 Dec 18 <https://www.ctdatahaven.org/profiles/hamden>

³⁸Connecticut Department of Education School Profile and Performance Report 2016-2017

³⁹End Hunger CT School Breakfast Report Card. 2018

Hunger and food hardship are seen in Hamden schools every day by teachers and principals. In a survey on hunger and children, across the school district, 80% of the 60 teachers and administrators that responded reported that hunger is a *large* problem for families and children in their school. Alarming, 97% of respondents reported that food security is also an issue for these families.

We know that hunger affects children's success at school and this is shown for Hamden students eligible for free or reduced-price meals, who, on average, across the district, scored lower on summative state assessments in English language, arts, mathematics, and science as compared to students not eligible for free or reduced priced lunch (see Table 6).

Table 6: Scores on State Standards-Based Assessments by Eligibility for Free or Reduced-Price Meals⁴²

	ELA		Math		Science	
	N	DPI	N	DPI	N	DPI
Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Meals	1,156	56.3	1,153	52.1	465	44.7
Not Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Meals	1,607	70.5	1,597	66.7	679	56.6

*DPI: District Performance Index is average performance of students on state-wide assessments in English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and Science (range =1-100; target=75)

Families Struggling with Food Hardship

Of parents responding to a food access survey completed in two Hamden Public Schools as part of this initiative (n=198), 29.7% reported currently having trouble providing fruits and/or vegetables to their family. Of those that reported being worried that food would run out, only 41.0% reported knowing where to get help for their family's food needs in the community.

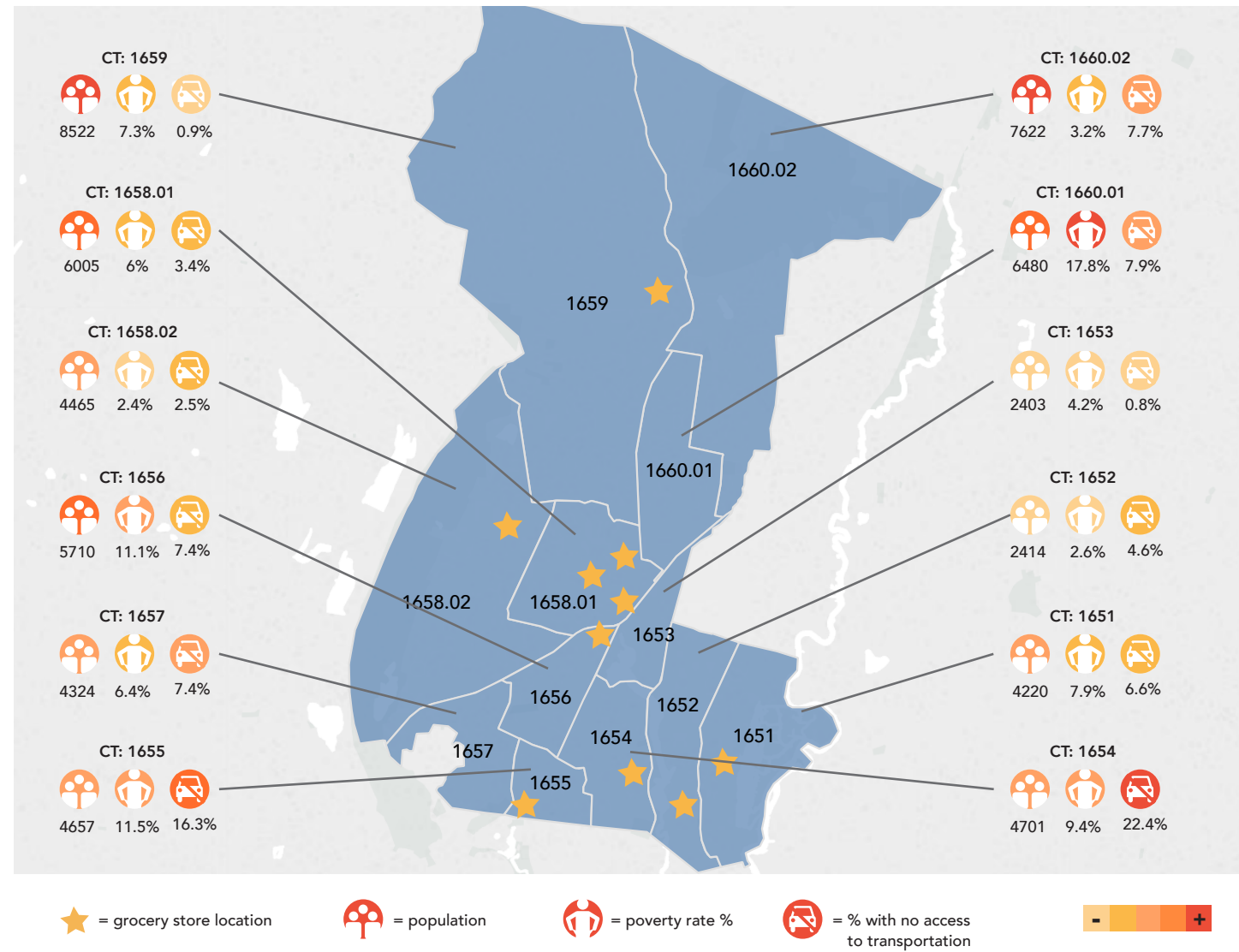
Food Resources and Assets: Where Residents Get Food

Hamden residents get their food from a variety of sources and this section describes the numerous ways residents can access food. The community has approximately 12 grocery stores that are concentrated in the southern portion of town, where most of Hamden's residents live (Figure 3).⁴⁰ As Figure 3 shows, without transportation, shoppers have limited consistent options for reliable, fresh, affordable food if a household is not close to one of these stores.

³⁹Connecticut Department of Education School Profile and Performance Report 2016-2017

⁴⁰The southern tracts (1659.01, 1653, 1652, 1651, 1654, 1655, 1656, and 1657) where grocery stores are located have a mean population density of 3,407 people per square mile, while the remaining Hamden census tracts have a mean population density of 1,744 people per square mile, or about half the density of the rest of the town. Dan Smolnik analysis and private correspondence Nov 2018

Figure 3: Grocery Store Locations by Hamden Census Tracts⁴¹



Transportation: The southern Hamden neighborhoods that are the most densely populated parts of town have less access to transportation compared to other areas.⁴² As of 2015, almost a quarter of the people living in southeast Hamden have no access to transportation (no car and no reasonable access to public transportation) compared to less than 1% of people living in the northwest part of town. Except for walking, about 25% of people in parts of Hamden cannot travel for basic needs such as groceries, work, or a visit to the doctor. Having to walk over

⁴¹The gold stars indicate the approximate locations of stores that have an active milk retail license from the Connecticut Department of Agriculture which is required to display a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables.

⁴²These communities have an 8.36% mean rate of no access to transportation including access to personal vehicles, car pools, and public transportation. The remainder of the town has a mean rate of no access to transportation of 4.75%, or, again, just under half the rate of the other tracts. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2015.

one-half mile to a grocery store makes reliable food purchase difficult or impossible for anyone with limited mobility. Adding inclement weather and other demands on time suggests that many people are food insecure by virtue of distance alone.

With dramatic concentrations of people with no ability to get to the grocery, the doctor, the library, or to parks, a vicious cycle of isolation from community, resources, and routes out of a resource constrained environment is established which is further exacerbated by factors such as poverty. For example, 22.4% of the population in Tract 1654 have no access to transportation and a poverty rate of 9.4%.

Federal and Community Food Programs

Families and individuals struggling with food hardship can access additional food resources from the following federal and community-based programs. Federal funds provide the largest supports to the community by far and include the school meals (free and reduced price meals program) serving breakfast and lunch to children, SNAP (commonly referred to as food stamps) serving families, Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC), and senior meals (congregate meals and Meals on Wheels).

Community-based food pantries provide free groceries and one soup kitchen serves meals in Hamden. Collectively the pantries and soup kitchen represent a host of community resources including donated funds, thousands of volunteer hours, and tens of thousands of pounds of donated food. The food pantry system has roots in the 1970s and the mechanics of how residents access food through these programs has not changed much in the intervening years.

School Meals Program

Hamden schools provide free or reduced price breakfasts and lunches⁴³ to eligible students in elementary and secondary schools whose family income is at or below 130% (free meals) or between 130% and 185% (reduced price meals) of the federal poverty level. These meals can also be provided to students who are documented and undocumented immigrants.

Recent studies have shown the positive long-term effects for students who participate in the school lunch program including improved nutrition and school attendance, along with the quality of time spent in schools and improving test scores and grades.⁴⁴ Moreover teachers in local schools tell many stories about hungry student's inability to focus and study.

⁴³School lunches and breakfasts are funded by the United States Department of Agriculture which is administered by the State Department of Education's Bureau of Health, Nutrition, Family Services, and Adult Education in Connecticut

⁴⁴J. Leos-Urbel et al. Economics of Education Review 36 (2013) 88-107

Table 7: School Meals Served in Hamden Public Schools - School Year 2017-2018⁴⁵

	Paid	Reduced Price	Free	Total Free and Reduced Meals	Percent Free and Reduced Meals	Total Meals Served
Breakfast Served	15,555	12,076	140,298	152,374	91%	167,929
Lunch Served	199,643	46,349	236,689	283,038	59%	482,681
Total Meals Served	215,198	58,425	376,987	435,412	67%	650,610

Schools in Hamden provided a total number of 650,610 meals to students in the 2017-2018 school year (Table 7). The majority of meals (67%) were served to children eligible for free and reduced priced meals. A notable 91% of total breakfasts served were free and overall, 58% of total meals served were free compared to 9% reduced and 33% paid (Table 7). Some schools may be eligible for 100% free school meals for all children, which would greatly enhance access to these meals for children who most need them.

Anecdotally, at many of the schools, and more specifically, at the Title I schools (Helen St., Ridge Hill, Church St., Shepherd Glen, and Dunbar Hill), teachers and principals talked about always having food available in their classrooms and offices for hungry children. The importance of this issue to school staff was also evidenced by their participation in and commitment to this initiative. Many staff spent countless extra hours outside their regular school day working to address food hardship for children at their schools. For example, the participation by principals and staff along with the superintendent of school and his staff was high throughout this initiative, when all meetings were after hours over the course of the year.

Summer Meals for Children and Families

Food hardship peaks in the summer. For families with school-aged children the loss of school breakfast and lunches, combined with the increased cost of having children out of school, exacerbates food difficulties and puts families and their children at risk for hunger. In the summer of 2018, to begin to address this issue and as a result of the initiative that launched this report, a partnership of many groups expanded the summer meals program to eight locations in Hamden (Table 8). A combination of breakfast, lunch, and supper was served at these community-based sites, providing a total of 12,648 meals (Table 9).

Another outcome of the Task Force was the initiation of a food distribution by the Connecticut Food Bank’s Mobile Pantry at Christ the Bread of Life Parish once a month during July and August. On those two evenings, this supper site had the

⁴⁵Data provided by Whitsons Culinary Group, food service provider for Hamden Public Schools

highest attendance by children at summer meals. These two mobile pantries provided fresh fruit and vegetables and other groceries to 234 households for an approximate total of 13,670 meals. This summer resource was funded by United Way of Greater New Haven.

Table 8: Hamden Summer Meals Locations and Data 2018 (First Year)⁴⁶

Location	Operation Dates	Site Type	Meal	Meals Served
Keefe Community Center	July 2 - August 17	Open	Breakfast	1,920
			Lunch	2,186
Christian Tabernacle Baptist Church	June 25 - August 10	Open	Breakfast	650
			Lunch	1,147
Church Street School	July 2 - August 3	Closed	Breakfast	691
			Lunch	682
Harris & Tucker Daycare	June 25 - August 3	Closed	Breakfast	1,229
			Lunch	1,401
Shepherd Glen School	July 2 - August 3	Open	Breakfast	1,103
		Closed	Lunch	1,358
Frank Cesare Field	July 2 - August 10	Open	Supper	139
Christian Bread of Life Parish	July 2 - August 10	Open	Supper	67*
Friendship Baptist Church	July 2 - August 10	Open	Supper	75

Table 9: Total Hamden Summer Meals Served 2018

Total Breakfasts Served	5,593
Total Lunches Served	6,774
Total Suppers Served	281
Grand Total Meals	12,648

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP benefits (previously food stamps) provides monthly assistance for eligible families to put healthy food on the table. The income limit for most households is 185% of the federal poverty level. Recipients receive SNAP funds through electronic benefit transfer (EBT) on a plastic benefits card loaded monthly that can be used to purchase food at grocery and eligible small stores and some farmers’

⁴⁶Data provided by New Haven Public Schools Central Kitchen, food service provider for summer meals in Hamden in 2018

markets. In Hamden, 4,879 residents, 9.2% of the total population, participated in SNAP in 2015 compared to 31.3% in New Haven.⁴⁷

Many residents suffering from food hardship don't qualify for SNAP because they do not meet the required low income levels. For example, nearly half of Connecticut residents who go hungry do not qualify for SNAP.

Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC)

WIC provides food and nutrition education to eligible pregnant women for up to six months postpartum, to those breastfeeding for up to one year after delivery, and for infants and children up to their fifth birthday. WIC participants receive monthly checks for the purchase of specific nutritious foods and foods covered may depend upon the nutritional needs of the individual. To be eligible, recipients must have income at or below 185% of the federal poverty level, live in Connecticut, and can be undocumented immigrants. 1.1% of Hamden residents participate in WIC compared to 9.7% in New Haven.⁴⁸ In 2018, approximately 663 residents in Hamden participated in WIC, which is administered through the Keefe Center twice a month.

Food Services for Seniors

Hamden has an emergency food pantry for seniors (those over age 60 years). Volunteers from local churches deliver food to homebound seniors and provide donated food. The food pantry refers seniors with immediate needs to Elderly Protective Services. From July 2017 to June 2018, the pantry served 138 seniors which compares to 223 seniors for the same time period in 2016-2017.⁴⁹ Angel Food Ministries at Hope Christian Church in North Haven also provides reduced cost groceries with no pre-conditions or restrictions for seniors.

Communal (or congregate) meals are served to seniors in Hamden at two locations, Miller Community Center and Putnam in the Davenport Dunbar Residence (Table 10). This program provides a hot, nutritious meal to any senior unable to prepare one for themselves. Davenport-Dunbar requests a \$3 donation for lunch, while Miller Community Center suggests a donation of \$2. Ninety-eight seniors were served over 24,400 meals from September 2017 to August 2018.⁵⁰ The Miller Senior Center also provides a hot lunch for a nominal fee to seniors through its community café.

A Meals on Wheels program delivers hot lunches to elderly people who are homebound or unable to prepare their own meals. Meals on wheels were provided

to 98 seniors from September 2017 to August 2018 in Hamden.⁵¹ The dip in service for Meals on Wheels and congregate meals shown in Table 10 was due to federal funding cuts. A wait list was implemented for home delivered meals and community sites were reduced to 4 from 5 days a week. These cuts only lasted for the period shown.

As table 10 shows, the number of clients served in both programs in Hamden decreased 18% over the past 3 years. In contrast, the food pantries in Hamden have seen a steady increase in seniors over the past four years, with a significant increase in 2017. The Greater New Haven area has also seen a steady increase in seniors suffering from hunger throughout the years. Lifebridge coordinates Meals on Wheels in Hamden and reported that younger and younger seniors now need home delivered meals – especially those with disabilities such as diabetes and kidney disease, along with veterans.

Table 10: Seniors Receiving Home Delivered and Communal Meals in Hamden⁵²

	Hamden Home Delivered Meals			Hamden Congregate Meals		
	Sep 1 2015 - Aug 31 2016	Sep 1 2016 - Aug 31 2017	Sep 1 2017 - Aug 31 2018	Sep 1 2015 - Aug 31 2016	Sep 1 2016 - Aug 31 2017	Sep 1 2017 - Aug 31 2018
# of Meals	28,809	23,666	24,408	14,133	11,134	10,827
# of Clients	120	82	98	266	226	218
Variance year over year		-32%	20%		-15%	-4%
Variance over 3 years			18.0			18%

Home Delivered Groceries

FISH, a not-for-profit group, delivers groceries to the most vulnerable homebound people in the Greater New Haven area. Delivering two weeks of densely nutritional groceries to homebound clients on a monthly basis, the service is intended to bridge the gap many households face as the end of the month approaches and food runs out. A dedicated corps of volunteers manages the program tasks and home delivery. In Hamden, FISH delivered 65 bags of groceries (approximately 9,360 pounds of food) each month to 19 households with 23 individuals from January through September 2018.

⁴⁷SNAP Work Requirements and Enrollment by Town. Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Legislative Research. 2016

⁴⁸State of Connecticut WIC Program Average Monthly WIC Participation by Town of Residence and Participant Category, 2015. Data Source: Statewide WIC Information System (SWIS)

⁴⁹Data from the Hamden Elderly Services Department

⁵⁰Data provided by Lifebridge, CT

⁵¹Ibid

⁵²Ibid

FISH is working with United Way of Greater New Haven and the Hamden Food Security Task Force to initiate a new program that would provide a small group of vulnerable families all their food needs through two deliveries per month. This initiative aims to test the impact of savings from grocery purchases on household finances. By freeing up household budgets from grocery purchases for a limited period of time (three to six months), households may be able to stabilize their finances and allow for measurable improvements in alleviating food hardship.

Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens

Hamden is home to a substantial number of food pantries that provide free food and groceries to families and individuals struggling with food hardship. One count estimated over 50 food pantries run largely by volunteers connected to social service organizations and faith-based providers. However, the majority of food distributed is provided by seven pantries and one soup kitchen, along with the Dinner for a Dollar that Grace and St. Peter Episcopal Church offers every Friday night (Figure 4).

In 2017, over 180,000 meals were served by the seven food pantries and one soup kitchen serving on average 1,200 individuals.⁵³ More than 15,000 meals were served on average every month. Women and men have been nearly equally served and the majority of clients were adults ages 18-59 years old. In most cases, three times more African-American residents used the pantries compared to White and Hispanic residents. The number of seniors above the age of 60 steadily increased over the past four years, increasing significantly in 2017.

Over 180,000 meals were served by seven pantries and one soup kitchen in 2017 to 1,200 individuals. More than 15,000 meals were served on average every month.

Figure 4: Food Pantries, Soup Kitchens, and Mobile Food Pantries in Hamden

Food Pantries

Keefe Community Center

11 Pine St.
203-562-5129
Mondays 12-2pm, Tuesdays 2-4pm,
Thursdays 12-2pm.
Serves Hamden residents. By appointment only.

Ministry of Helps

308/310 Morse St.
203-785-8057
Mondays 5-6pm. Must fill out registration at first visit.

Home Pantry Mission of Dunbar Church

125 Putnam Ave.
203-288-2342
1st and 3rd Friday of the month 9-10am.
Seniors 62+ living in Davenport-Dunbar Residences.

Faith, Healing, and Deliverance Ministries

60 Connolly Pkwy. #5B
203-288-0066
3rd Saturday of the month 9-11am. Photo ID required. Serves residents of greater New Haven. Walk-In.

St. Ann's Food Pantry

930 Dixwell Ave.
203-562-5700
1st and 3rd Friday of the month 9-11am.
Serves Hamden and New Haven residents. Walk-In. Photo ID required.

Breakthrough Church

481 Shelton Ave.
203-507-2681
3rd Saturday 1-3pm.

Love Center Deliverance Ministry

19 George St.
203-772-4314
2nd and 4th Saturday of the month 10am-12pm.
Serves residents of greater New Haven. Walk-In. Photo ID required at 1st visit.

Soup Kitchens

St. Ann's Soup Kitchen

930 Dixwell Ave.
203-562-5700
1st and 3rd Friday of the month 9-11am.
Serves Hamden and New Haven residents. Walk-In. Photo ID required.

Dinner for a Dollar

Grace and St. Peter Episcopal Church
2927 Dixwell Ave.
203-248-4338
Every Friday night 6-7pm. Serves everyone. Suggested Donation \$1.

Mobile Food Pantries

Hasan Islamic Center

870 Dixwell Ave.
203-741-9751
4th of the month 11am-12pm. Open to all.

Christ the Bread of Life Parish

322 Circular Ave.
203-288-1652
2nd Wednesday of the month 5-6pm. Open to all.

⁵³Data from the Connecticut Food Bank for this paragraph

Mobile Food Pantries

Two mobile food pantries run by the Connecticut Food Bank in collaboration with the Hasan Islamic Center and Christ the Bread of Life Parish provide additional food resources at no cost to participants. The mobile pantry at the Hasan Islamic Center is a very busy distribution, serving more than 175 households each month.⁵⁴ These households reflect 75% African American, 10% Hispanic, 10% White, and 5% other races. All of the shoppers at this mobile pantry have incomes below the poverty line and a large number of seniors attend it regularly each month.



Additionally, the Connecticut Food Bank's GROW truck visited the ML Keefe Center for two six-month periods. The GROW truck continues to visit the Church Street Community and is at the Keefe Community Center for six months during the spring and summer of 2019.

As noted earlier, the mobile pantry at Christ the Bread of Life Parish started in 2018 in response to work on summer hunger conducted by the Food Security Task Force and in partnership with the United Way of Greater New Haven and the Connecticut Food Bank. The first two distributions in July and August served 234 households and this site continues to provide food monthly to residents.⁵⁵ The mobile pantries are an important resource for many community members because shoppers do not need to show identification or any documentation or meet income thresholds to access them.

Mobilizing to Make Sure All Residents Have Access to Healthy Food

The Hamden Food Security Task Force has convened for over a year since fall 2017. Since that time, a broad table of community providers, residents, academic institutions, and the public schools have mobilized to work collaboratively to focus on and solve the community's food hardship issues. This year-long process realized a number of extraordinary projects including this report. Table 11 summarizes the results to date of this remarkable collaboration.

Table 11: Summary of Results (2017-present) Hamden Food Security Task Force

Activities at the Public Schools	Data
Surveys completed by teachers/admin	60
Surveys completed by parents	200
Community Dinners/Events	2

Providing Food	Data
New Mobile Pantry Locations	1
New Summer Meals Sites	4
Mobile Pantry Visitors	1,164
Number of Food Pantries/Soup Kitchens	8
Pounds of Food - Mobile Pantry	88,350
Summer Meals Served	8,915

Meetings and Volunteers	Data
Food Task Force Meetings	9
Data and School Subcommittee Meetings	9
Mobile Pantry Volunteers	77
Total Volunteer Hours	317

⁵⁴Data from the Connecticut Food Bank for this paragraph

⁵⁵Ibid

The group focused on tangible projects that evolved as the year went on. The addition of new resources to combat food hardship during the summer was a significant success and reached hundreds of children and their families (see section on Summer Meals for Children and Families). The schools collaborated to survey teachers and parents providing interesting insights into the problem faced by families and children (Table 12). Of the 60 teachers responding to the survey, 80% reported that lack of food was an issue for children in their school (Table 12). Two community events at local schools in South Hamden provided additional information from parents.

Table 12: School Survey Results for Parents and Teachers

Measure	Response	Survey
Teachers - Do you know what to do if a child is hungry?	Yes	63%
Teachers - How big of an issue is lack of food for the families and children in your school?	A problem to a large problem	80%
Teachers - How many children in your classroom depend on school meals for the majority of their nutrition?	About half to most	80%
Community - How concerning is the lack of food in your neighborhood?	Moderately to very - Spanish	90%
	Moderately to very - English	29%

Another success was the application for federal designation of a neighborhood in Hamden as a Qualified Opportunity Zone. At the initiative of a member of the Task Force, and with the support of the United Way of Greater New Haven, Hamden government leaders solicited the governor of Connecticut to nominate a Hamden Census district as a Qualified Opportunity Zone (QOZ) under the new tax law. The U.S. Department of the Treasury granted this designation in 2018. The QOZ designation for tract 1655, at the southern end of the town, provides tax incentives for certain investors in the QOZ, intended to encourage renovation, development, business, and job creation.

All these projects were developed and completed by a broad group of engaged people, many of whom donated hours beyond their regular work day. In addition to an active Task Force, several subcommittees convened to focus on work with the schools, gathering baseline data, and developing this report. Meetings have been fun, engaging, focused on results, and collaborative – their success is evident by the

continued participation of an ever widening circle of people. By the end of the 12 month period, the table has expanded to include many facets of the community.

A Community-Based, Inclusive Model

The Hamden Food Security Task Force was predicated on the thesis that smart, targeted investments and services, guided by those closest to the problems, would bring better outcomes. Solutions crafted locally and including those affected by food hardship can be sustained through advocacy, engagement, and public and private investment. A broad engagement across Hamden’s many worlds – residents, business, faith, social service, health, city, schools and others – can generate a wide swathe of ideas and solutions that can be tested by collaborative efforts and a multi-sector approach deeply integrated within the many communities in Hamden.

To have a measurable impact on hunger and food hardship, efforts must move beyond providing food alone. The new faces of hunger – particularly children and families – require customized and coordinated solutions informed by those affected. Enduring solutions can be built on communities’ strengths and needs.

The evolving work in this initiative is focused on meeting the immediate needs of those facing hardship – residents, after all, should not be hungry or struggling so much to put nutritious food on the table for themselves and their families. Improving nutrition and reducing stressors associated with food hardship are critical to improve long-term health and life outcomes for children and families. **A fundamental goal of this initiative for Hamden is a healthy, thriving community and economy.**

Core Components of the Model

- 1. Strength-based:** Hamden has many strengths and resources. This initiative is already leveraging these and the solutions that follow will be built upon this existing platform.
- 2. Community-driven:** Residents experiencing hunger will co-lead and drive efforts with leaders and providers to identify challenges, opportunities, and enduring solutions.
- 3. Social justice:** The data on food hardship and services shows great inequity across Hamden’s racial, ethnic, and income lines. A social justice framework will guide efforts to address these inequities.
- 4. Innovation:** The ways people are connected to food will be expanded and re-tooled through human-centered approaches that work with whole families. Technology and new approaches may also offer solutions.
- 5. Integration:** Community, public, and private partners will leverage resources and build the capacity to support family and individual needs including financial stability, parenting support, access to income, educational attainment, living wage, nutrition, and health.
- 6. Continuous Learning:** Progress and impact will be assessed throughout to course correct, in partnership with local academic institutions – Quinnipiac, Yale, and Southern Connecticut State Universities.
- 7. Data-driven:** Community-level strategies will reflect current data on available services, penetration rates, and unmet needs. Data can be a powerful tool for showing what is or isn’t working and informing adjustments along the way.
- 8. Sustainable:** Local, state, and federal investment and collaboration will be convened to engage the necessary resources.

Looking Ahead

People are struggling and continue to struggle in Hamden with food hardship. **With 39% of Hamden families and residents struggling to put food on the table regularly and 42% of children in public school eligible for free and reduced priced lunches, the extent of food hardship is without question a crisis in Hamden.** The reality of this crisis translates to a substantial number of children with compromised health, educational outcomes, well-being, and the combined impact of all three on these children's' futures. Other vulnerable populations, such as seniors, also face poor long-term health impacts as a result of inadequate nutrition.

Food hardship cuts across all neighborhoods but there are clear and deep racial and economic inequities in in Hamden. In some neighborhoods the crisis is at a disturbingly high level, reflecting deep inequities that must be addressed to ensure the health and well-being of all residents.

Hamden has resources in place but they are not nearly enough to provide healthy food and assistance to everyone in the community that needs it. The community has many strengths:

- School meal programs feed a huge number of children and provide an important safeguard for health and good nutrition;
- Food and mobile pantries, a soup kitchen, and other community resources provide important access to free meals and groceries; and
- Senior Meals on Wheels, congregate meals, and senior food pantries are an essential source of support for vulnerable seniors.
- Government funded programs like school meals, SNAP, and WIC, along with senior Meals on Wheels and congregate meals provide the bulk of financial resources within the community for free food. However, residents must fulfill eligibility requirements to access these programs.

Over If the child's basic needs aren't met (especially hunger) then they will not be able to properly function throughout the day. I make sure that my students have breakfast and a snack so they can actively participate and learn in class.

A teacher at a Hamden Elementary School

Building on these strengths, a bold and broad community vision is needed to solve the underlying reasons for why Hamden residents are suffering such extensive food hardship. This vision will need to address the deeper questions about why residents are encountering these issues, such as access to jobs that provide meaningful income so that families and individuals are not struggling with providing basics such as food. This crisis deserves an urgent response that catalyzes the communities' many sectors into action to improve the lives of our low-income residents and will require community-wide investment of funds, time, and energy. A collective response with broad community ownership with a focus on impact and collaborative, cross-cutting initiatives can develop sustainable solutions to address healthy, basic food needs and well-being in general.

Most importantly, residents wrestling with the issue must have a voice in and a pathway to be part of the process of designing and implementing solutions. Engaging residents most affected by the problem suggests the best chance of finding enduring solutions that work in Hamden.

The efforts of the Task Force demonstrates that there is deep energy, engagement, and interest in addressing these issues across a broad set of partners. Importantly, the results from the first year (Table 11), along with existing resources, shows that the community has some solutions to address the critical needs of access to food for everyone.

The benefits for Hamden will be multiple in the short- and long-term. Well-nourished children learn and function better, with studies showing their improved health and well-being. Their long-term prospects for work and health are greatly improved by paying attention to something as basic as healthy food from birth through adolescence. Seniors with access to nutritional food also have better outcomes. Over the long-term, improved health outcomes due to better nutrition and food access will reduce the need for town services. The alternative is to adjust to a "new normal" of extended poverty and hardship across neighborhoods.

Mobilizing Resources

The success of this initiative has been built by mobilizing new resources, forging new partnerships, and leveraging existing resources. By broadening the table, more partners and residents have come together to explore what is possible and to create new opportunities. Continuing to broaden the table and leverage existing resources is important. However, the community and its partners must build more financial, human, and other capital to address the various complex components of this problem. Local funding and philanthropy will be critical to build capacity to address these challenges.

The Qualified Opportunity Zone (QOZ) that Hamden received, an outcome of this initiative, provides an example of how public and private funding can be leveraged to create economic opportunity. Importantly, during the development of the

QOZ, the community will need to ensure that the QOZ keeps the needs of struggling community members front and center while designing strategies to financially stabilize these families and individuals. Properly designed strategies can lift a percentage of the most vulnerable out of poverty and provide them with job opportunities along with the preparation they will need to be prepared for these jobs. This type of strategic approach works for families, businesses, and policy-makers and, in short, can move Hamden to economic success.

We recommend that the Town of Hamden renew its commitment to having healthy food access on the policy agenda and continue to adopt this critical issue as a priority. We urge the broader community to drive and join in the many efforts to eradicate hunger and the struggle for healthy food across Hamden's neighborhoods.

Our Call to Action

This initiative has shown that there is much we can successfully do to solve the immediate issues of accessing healthy food for residents who need it. Long-term, our attention must shift to strategies for strengthening Hamden's food system and ensuring that each resident has healthy food on their plate every day. Importantly, our response to this crisis must build equitable food resources, specifically for neighborhoods with gaps. Broadly, Hamden can also address the need for community food-related resources including exploring food related businesses that offer small business opportunities, providing training for entry level and living wage jobs in or out of Hamden, along with sustainable green resources.

We invite a broader community conversation to further channel the great energy and creativity of Hamden residents and businesses to solve this seemingly intractable but ultimately solvable problem. Solving this problem, not merely band-aiding it with food distribution, can energize Hamden's local food economy, while paying long-term benefits for residents' health and well-being, ultimately meaning less drain on strained town resources.

The issue is complex and our efforts have shown that solutions can be dreamed of, designed, and implemented one-by-one to solve aspects of the problem. In the face of this complexity, we need to build a more nuanced framework to understand and guide policy decisions to build sustainable solutions. Understanding the problem more fully and engaging the voice of all residents of the Town of Hamden will lead to solutions by the inherently creative, determined, and hopeful town residents.

This report has several goals. One goal is to catalyze the engagement of the broader Hamden community to develop sustained action to address and ultimately abolish food hardship across all neighborhoods. A second goal is to build awareness of the problem aimed at creating this sustained, Hamden-wide effort. By educating and engaging residents, the public sector, business, and non-profit leaders on the prevalence and impact of hunger in our community, along with the far reaching and pervasive impacts of food hardship on a vulnerable and growing percentage of residents, the Town can better develop meaningful solutions within reach.

This initiative has already engaged many different facets of the Hamden community and has seeded various work groups focusing on solutions. Community participation, community-driven ideas, imagination, and effort have started the work of solving some aspects of this complex problem. The process has been structured deliberately as a dynamic one to allow community players to participate as they

can, bringing their ideas, energy, and action to this initiative's many facets. We are intentionally engaging and weaving in the voices and participation of those most affected to engage them and follow their lead on solutions that directly meet their needs and ultimately that can endure.

The report and a shorter summary will be used to build awareness of food hardship in Hamden and to energize participation broadly. A working group from the Task Force is currently working on activities in the community to build a more widespread understanding of the "new faces of hunger" in Hamden and to illustrate the extent to which people are struggling day-to-day to put food on the table for themselves and their families.

Four Key Priorities: Importantly, the Task Force task force identified four key priorities to focus efforts on in 2019:

- 1. Improve access to healthy food** for all community members and specifically those in need and with limited healthy food options.
- 2. Support families so that they have enduring access to free, affordable, and sustainable healthy food for their children and households** including expanding access to school meals and building on the summer anti-hunger work.
- 3. Grow the Hamden Food Security Task Force and develop a Food Policy Council⁵⁶** in order to create sustainable solutions, better streamline the emergency food system, and engage more community members.
- 4. Inform the Qualified Opportunity Zone (QOZ)** to ensure that it addresses the need for access to healthy food and living wage jobs and considers social justice and equity issues as vital considerations during zone development.

The Task Force will be working on developing a road map to guide and focus efforts from 2019-2021.

We invite you to join these efforts. There are a number of ways you can get immediately involved and make a difference:

- 1. Join the Food Security Task Force** or one of the working groups. Our group needs new membership and partners to develop new ideas and collaborate to get food-related projects done.
- 2. Spread the word** – pass this report or its summary on to others (www.uwgnh.org/HamdenHunger)
- 3. Stay up-to-date and follow progress** on this project on social media
- 4. Volunteer** at a local food pantry or soup kitchen
- 5. Donate** funds to support local food programs

⁵⁶Local Food Policy Councils (FPC's) are often a component of local government featuring a collaboration between diverse stakeholders from across the food system and government officials aimed at addressing issues like hunger, food hardship, health, the environment and the economy.

Objectives and Tactics

Goal: Improve access to free and affordable healthy food for all community members:

1. Optimize food availability throughout the community:

a. Serve people in the community who are in need of food assistance

- i. Locate and determine need of those who may not be served through existing programs.
- ii. Understand the needs of vulnerable groups including families, children, seniors, homebound, and new immigrants.
- iii. Explore ways of communicating to and connecting them to sources of healthy food available to them.

b. Streamline the emergency food system - pantries and soup kitchens:

- i. Ensure hours of operation provide coverage for households in need and ample healthy food options.
- ii. Conduct an assessment to better understand the needs of families and individuals encountering food hardship.
- iii. Explore ways to convene multiple services in one-stop for households needing assistance.

c. Community gardens:

- i. Explore creating community gardens in Hamden focused on increasing the supply of healthy fruits and vegetables to households needing assistance.

d. Community farm:

- i. Explore the development of a Hamden farm for community members combining fresh produce and health programs.

e. Monthly Community Meals:

- i. Explore and host community gatherings in local places with healthy, low cost or free meals served. Consider educational component for these gatherings to provide information on healthful food choices and cooking, community resources, etc.

f. Local Business and Community Support

- i. Explore ways to gain financial and other supports for task-force efforts from business and other parts of the Hamden community.

2. Support families so that they have enduring access to sustainable, nutritious food resources.

a. Build on the summer meals program

- i. Increase awareness of the summer meals sites through a full 'blitz' effort and the availability of open sites in summer 2019.

- ii. Use all available Connecticut Food Bank resources to fullest extent including mobile food pantry, school backpack, school farmers market pantry;
- iii. Expand community outreach e.g. with palm cards for police, send out end-of-year school flyers;
- iv. Add parent/adult meals to summer meals (community dinner concept could be piloted in 2019).

b. Expand access to school meals (free and reduced price lunch – FRPL) by working with the schools to qualify all eligible students district-wide.

c. Form a task force focused on addressing the healthy food needs of children and families.

d. Pilot initiatives to support family financial stability

e. Annual evaluation and assessment of food hardship at school and community level: Use surveys for parents and school staff.

3. Engage more community members ensuring meaningful and sustainable grassroots representation.

a. Expand Witnesses to Hunger to Hamden and find other tactics to engage community members dealing with food hardship in the solutions and implementation FPC, school, Witnesses.

b. Grow the Hamden Food Security Task Force

c. Establish a Hamden Food Policy Council in order to create and monitor the implementation of sustainable solutions.

d. Engage clergy and other community members/groups and collaborate with them for more and improved solutions.

e. Continue to find ways to widely communicate the food needs in Hamden and how community members can help/get involved.

4. Inform the Qualified Opportunity Zone (QOZ) to ensure it addresses the need for access to healthy food and living wage jobs and considers social justice and equity issues as vital considerations during zone development.

Evaluation is a core component of all 4 objectives:

Ensure evaluation is ongoing including formalizing data collection e.g. school survey teachers on state of children's hunger in classroom. Institutionalize evaluation – qualitative and quantitative data collection.

Thank you



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of Greater New Haven



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