Goldsboro: Isolation and Marginalization in Eastern North Carolina

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

The greatest issues in Goldsboro are poverty and segregation. Our kids can sometimes miss out on a lot of the possibilities of life. They can miss out on relationships with all sorts of different kinds of people, with different backgrounds. There are a lot of people I know in town who will never come further than Ash Street. For any purpose, at any time. So we work on that a lot here, trying to make sure our students are not constrained by that. It can make it harder to get a full view of the world. I was able to go to UNC and I loved it. But for these kids, it can be harder to get them that chance. I worry that they’ll see just what they see now. That they’ll just be relegated. Young girls sometimes think they’ll just have a baby so they can set up their own family. I miss seeing black and white people walking around together. Even blacks in the county feel separate from blacks in the city here.

—Danielle Baptiste, Dillard Academy

It is amazing what we do to poor people here. We marginalize and punish people for being poor. Goldsboro has layers and layers of poverty. That means multiplying layers of problems. The poor in this county, chronically, have never been given a real chance. A good system would try to reach all of them. Poor families start to think they don’t deserve any better. That this is just what their lives are meant to be.

—Shirley Edwards, civil rights and community activist

Goldsboro, a mid-sized city in Wayne County in eastern North Carolina, faces poverty challenges both historical and contemporary that are too commonly seen across much of the region. Traditionally divided along black and white racial lines, the city is in the process of being transformed by demographic changes, even as it wrestles with the consequences of two recent recessions and the economic transitions that swept the state in the early 2000s.

Originally known as Waynesborough, Goldsboro grew quickly in the 1840s, and by the onset of the Civil War, had become a vital rail junction and a major trading center for the large, slavery-dependent cotton plantations in the region. When the war concluded, African Americans participated significantly in both state and federal “fusion” politics, helping to elect four black congressmen from the famed Second Congressional District, until violent state and private forces drove black North Carolinians from the polity at the turn of the century.

Although agricultural production slowed dramatically during the Great Depression, the arrival of the Seymour Johnson Air Force Base during World War II brought historic numbers of jobs and triggered an economic expansion not before seen in the region. Even today, Seymour Johnson is Goldsboro’s largest employer, sustaining an almost $300 million annual payroll. Beyond the air force, principal large employers include the local school district, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Wayne Memorial Hospital, the county and Walmart. In the early 1990s, Money Magazine recognized Goldsboro as a Top Ten City in the United States.2

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1 All of the quotations in this report are taken from interviews with the North Carolina Poverty Research Fund.

2 City of Goldsboro, “About Goldsboro.”
Public school integration controversies and backlash apparently led to white flight from Goldsboro to the county. By 1970, 49% of Goldsboro residents were African American, up 8% from the last census, and the white population had dropped by 18%. New family dwelling construction declined pointedly in Goldsboro, as it increased substantially in the county. White student enrollment in the Goldsboro school district dropped precipitously. From 1964-1973, the white student population in city public schools dropped from 54 to 41% while the black student count rose from 46 to 59% district wide. An overall decline in Goldsboro city school enrollment also led to a marked loss of teachers and resources. Continuing enrollment, desegregation and funding tensions led the North Carolina General Assembly, in 1991, to allow a merger of the Goldsboro and Wayne County school systems. In 2009, the North Carolina NAACP sued the merged school system alleging that discriminatory attendance zones placed a strong majority of poor, black students in highly segregated institutions, denying equal educational opportunity.

In 2015, Goldsboro was listed as the fifth poorest city in America. Recent studies on mobility found that the greater Goldsboro area had more intense income mobility challenges than 95% of all the counties in the United States. Concentrations of poor and minority households, especially in a number of city center census tracts, reveal an array of intensely distressed neighborhoods, some of which are almost entirely African American. They present remarkable rates of poverty, child poverty and unemployment. Beyond such statistics, however, appear hardships, dangers and debilitations one would think impermissible in a society of notable wealth, and premised upon ideals of equal dignity and worth.

Despite these robust challenges, or perhaps because of them, Goldsboro is also home to a remarkable cadre of selfless and indefatigable community leaders, educators and social services providers who make it difficult to despair for the city’s fortunes. Driven frequently by faith, commitment to the city and its people, and seemingly unconquerable sentiments of brotherhood, they bolster and sustain even hugely challenged communities. It can be hard to digest the full measure of their strength, endurance and benevolence.

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This report is part of a series documenting economic distress in a variety of North Carolina communities. Earlier reports examined local manifestations of poverty in Charlotte and Wilkes County, as well as among low-income people without access to health insurance. In this report, as in the others, we combine data and narrative to paint a portrait and, hopefully, to educate and inspire. We start by outlining the lay of the land by examining key data points—on population, income and poverty, and on the economy and local labor force. We then dive deeper by presenting the testimony of people in Goldsboro who have been touched by poverty. The themes they raise—the stunting isolation of concentrated poverty, lack of affordable housing and school inequality—are explored in more detail in the sections that follow. We acknowledge some of the remarkable people who call Goldsboro home in the next section, and, buoyed by their example, conclude by suggesting a few modest recommendations.

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3 Sauter et al., “America’s Richest and Poorest Cities.”
People, Poverty and the Economy

Demographics of Goldsboro

Like many places in eastern North Carolina, Goldsboro has not experienced the population growth occurring in North Carolina’s more urbanized areas. It has lost about 5,000 residents since its peak in 1990, with the population stabilizing in recent years around 36,000 (Figure 1). Goldsboro contains about 29% of the population of the county, and is its county seat and largest center of population. The population of Wayne County is projected to grow slightly but steadily in the coming decades, fueled primarily by an increase in the Hispanic population (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Goldsboro population by race and ethnicity, 1980-2016

Figure 2. Wayne County projected population by ethnicity, 2017-2037
The white population in Goldsboro fell below 50% by 1990 and now stands at about 38% (Figure 3). Although the number of black residents has also fallen since its peak, it has declined at a slower rate and African Americans now make up 51% of the population. Another 6% of the population is Hispanic, 2% is Asian, and 3% identifies as two or more races. While the city has a larger share of black residents than the county, the county has a greater proportion of Hispanic, Haitian and Asian residents, many of whom live in Mount Olive and in census tracts to the east of Goldsboro.

**Figure 3. Population by race and ethnicity**

![Population by race and ethnicity](image)

Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey

**Income and Poverty**

Median household income, in both the city and county, is markedly lower than in the rest of North Carolina. While the state’s median figure is over $48,000 annually, in Wayne County it is a little over $40,000 and in Goldsboro proper, the median household income is a scant $32,148 (Figure 4). Although median household income in North Carolina is finally recovering ground lost during the recession, up over $1,000 from the previous estimate, Goldsboro’s median household income continues to lag. In 2016, it was actually $2,886 less than the previous year’s total. Declining income has contributed to the hollowing out of Goldsboro’s middle class, as reported by the Pew Research Center in 2016. It found that between 2000 and 2014, the percentage of adults in the middle class fell by 12 percentage points, from 60% to 48%, while the percentage in the lower income tier increased by 14 percentage points, from 27% to 41% (the top tier also lost two percentage points). In other words, all the changes flowed downward—the top and middle shrunk as the bottom group grew. Pew called this shift “one of the greatest decreases among the 229 metropolitan areas analyzed” and “an unambiguous signal of economic loss.”

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5 2012-2016 American Community Survey, B19013.
6 Pew Research Center, “America’s Shrinking Middle Class.”
Over 46% of Goldsboro’s 13,850 households earn less than $30,000 a year. Another 29% make between $30,000 and $59,999. In total, three in four households make less than $60,000. Almost 2,000 households in Goldsboro (or 13%) have incomes of less than $10,000 per year. Statewide, the figure is 8%. On the other end of the spectrum, only 9% of households make $100,000 or more a year, compared to twice that rate in North Carolina generally (Figure 5).

Dividing the population of Goldsboro into quintiles based on income confirms that households in every income group take home much less in Goldsboro than in the state (if all households were ranked in order by income and then divided into five groups, each with the same number of households, each group is a quintile). The gap in income increases as incomes go up. The household income that marks the lower limit of the top 5% of households takes home over $56,000 less in Goldsboro than in North Carolina (Figure 6). Nonetheless, households in the bottom quintile suffer the most dramatic reduction. The household with the highest income in the bottom quintile (the upper limit) makes 36% less in Goldsboro than in the state, compared to “only” 31% less for the top tier.

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7 2012-2016 American Community Survey, S1901.
Figure 6. Upper limit of each income quintile and bottom limit of top 5%

![Graph showing income quintiles and top 5% limits for North Carolina and Goldsboro.](image)

Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey

Although at bare subsistence levels, at least the average income in the bottom quintile grew over the past few years. The same can’t be said for the other quintiles, all of which saw substantial losses. Between the first half of the 2010s and the second, these middle and higher-income quintiles saw deeper cuts to average income than in the state. And, as Figure 7 shows, even as the richest households in the state showed modest growth on average, incomes in the richest households in Goldsboro shrank by over 10%. This means that financial volatility reached across all households in Goldsboro more forcefully than in the state.

Figure 7. Change in average income by quintile, 2006-2010 and 2012-2016

![Graph showing change in average income by quintile for North Carolina and Goldsboro.](image)

Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey

Income in Goldsboro is differentiated by household, age and race, but as indicated above, at consistently lower rates than the state median. In Goldsboro, median household income for married couple families, at about $61,000, is well over twice the amount for other household types, but still shy of the median in North Carolina by more than $12,000 (Figure 8). Median income by age shows that households headed by an individual 45-64 years old have the highest incomes of any adult age group, in both city and state. However, these peak earnings years bring in $21,000 less annually, at the median, in Goldsboro (Figure 9).
Whites make noticeably more, per household, than African Americans and Hispanics in both the city and the county (Figure 10). In Goldsboro, white households make about $20,000 more than black and Hispanic households. But notably, median income for white households in Goldsboro is about $10,000 less than the statewide figure. Astonishingly, more than 83% of black households, and almost two-thirds of white households, have incomes less than $60,000, underscoring the effect of depressed incomes (Figure 11).
Turning to individual earnings for full-time, year-round workers underscores the disparity in pay between Goldsboro and the state (Figure 12). (Looking at earnings allows us to compare individuals, as opposed to households, which vary in size and number of workers.) Although white men make the most, median earnings are $12,000 less than for their state counterparts. A sizable difference also appears for white women, with median earnings in Goldsboro that are $6,000 less than in the state. However, this should not obscure the fact that median earnings for black and Hispanic workers in Goldsboro are lower than the state’s meager benchmark. For all male full-time workers, the gap in median earnings between Goldsboro and the state is about $11,000 ($43,507 to $32,476); for women, it’s about $6,000 ($36,144 and $30,695).⁸

While education clearly paves the way to higher earnings, the reward in Goldsboro is stingier than in the state. The more education a person in Goldsboro has, the larger the earnings gap. In Goldsboro, the median earnings for people with a graduate or professional degree is about $14,000 less than the state median; for high school dropouts, median

⁸ 2012-2016 American Community Survey, B20017.
earnings are $5,000 less (or a paltry $14,211 annually). Here too large disparities in median earnings exist between men and women. Women with a graduate or professional degree make $7,000 less at the median than their state counterparts and $16,000 less than their male colleagues in Goldsboro. The earnings gap makes it hard for women without a second earner in the household to achieve financial security, especially if they have children. Places like Goldsboro that fail to incentivize education through higher pay run the risk of losing college-educated workers, now and in the future. In the words of one of our interviewees, Goldsboro is “exporting everyone who would make things better.”

*Figure 12. Median earnings by sex and race/ethnicity*

The savings and banking habits of households in Goldsboro expose the fault lines of financial stress. Forty-five percent of households are liquid asset poor, meaning they lack sufficient savings that they can convert quickly to cash in order to subsist at the poverty level for three months without income. Twenty-two percent of households have zero net worth, compared to 17% in the state. Eleven percent of households are unbanked—they have neither a checking nor savings account—and 21% are underbanked, turning to untraditional and possibly predatory financial services even though they may have a bank account. These measures indicate that many in Goldsboro have little to no reserves from which to draw, and are vulnerable to financial shocks, such as sudden emergencies, or income volatility.

Poverty is high in Goldsboro, and shows no sign of diminishing. At its low point in 2000, the city’s poverty rate was almost 20%—much higher than the state or national rates that year. By 2016, it had risen to over 25%. The Wayne County rate, at 22%, was also much higher than the statewide figure of 17% and the national rate of 15% (Figure 13). Over half of Goldsboro residents live on incomes under 200% of the federal poverty standard, a share that has increased 8.5 percentage points since 2000 and reflects the shrinking numbers of middle income households reported by Pew (Figure 14). Over ten percent of Goldsboro residents live in extreme poverty, which is less than 50% of the federal poverty level or about $12,170 for a family of two adults and two children in 2016. Higher percentages of Wayne County residents are uninsured than is true for North Carolina, and greater percentages are eligible for Medicaid.

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9 2012-2016 American Community Survey, B20004.
10 Pat Yates interview with the North Carolina Poverty Research Fund.
11 Prosperity Now, “Prosperity Now Scorecard.”
12 200% or more of the federal poverty threshold is often used as a proxy for basic financial stability; less than 200% indicates financial precariousness.
13 2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, S1701.
14 2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, S2701.
Poverty besets all demographic groups, but it’s no secret that some feel its sting more intensely. Sex, race, age, household type and education all play a role in determining the likelihood that someone will experience poverty. Women and children are especially hard hit (Figure 15) as are racial and ethnic minorities (Figure 16). Thirteen percent of white residents of Goldsboro, but 29% of Asians and 34% of African Americans are poor. Interestingly, the poverty rate for Latinos is far higher in the county than in Goldsboro, though at 30% in Goldsboro, it is still remarkably elevated. The double burden of sex and race means that 38% of black girls and women are poor.\textsuperscript{15} The rates are worse for kids, and again, more severe for racial and ethnic minorities. Almost 40% of all Goldsboro children live in poverty, but black kids are about three times as likely to be poor as white ones (Figure 17).

\textsuperscript{15} 2012-2016 American Community Survey, B17001B.
**Figure 15. Poverty rate (all, sex, child, senior)**

![Poverty rate chart](chart15.png)

Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey

**Figure 16. Poverty rate by race and ethnicity**

![Poverty rate by race chart](chart16.png)

Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey

**Figure 17. Child poverty by race and ethnicity**

![Child poverty by race chart](chart17.png)

Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey
Poverty can vary substantially by type of household. Households led by a single adult, whether male- or female-headed, have a much higher poverty rate in the state and an even higher poverty rate in Goldsboro (Figure 18). This is especially true for female-headed households in Goldsboro, where 43% are poor—10 percentage points more than for the state.

**Figure 18. Poverty rate by household type**

[Bar chart showing poverty rates by household type in North Carolina, Wayne County, and Goldsboro.]

Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey

Educational achievement is a common prescription for poverty. While it’s true that more schooling translates into a much-reduced poverty rate, in Goldsboro and elsewhere, those with more education do not necessarily elude poverty. While almost half of residents 25 and over without a high school diploma are poor—13.5 percentage points more than the state rate—those with some college experience or an associate’s degree have an unusually high poverty rate that is almost seven percentage points higher than in the state (Figure 19). It’s not until the bachelor’s degree level that Goldsboro achieves parity with North Carolina.

**Figure 19. Poverty rate by education level**

[Bar chart showing poverty rates by education level in North Carolina, Wayne County, and Goldsboro.]

Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey
Where there’s poverty, there’s hunger. Over 23,000 food insecure people live in Wayne County, including approximately 7,500 hungry kids. That’s about one in five people and one in four children.\(^\text{16}\) About 27% of Goldsboro residents receive SNAP benefits (food stamps). Twenty-nine percent of SNAP households in Goldsboro have at least one person over 60; 32% are households with children and 42% have at least one person with a disability. At least one person works in over 70% of SNAP households in Goldsboro, and the median household income is about $5,000 less than for the state generally (Figure 20).

**Figure 20. Work and income characteristics of households that receive SNAP**

![Graph showing percent of families with one or more workers and median income for North Carolina, Wayne County, and Goldsboro.](image)

Source: 2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

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### Wayne County Economy

Underlying Goldsboro’s poverty and its shrinking middle class are a sluggish local economy and low wages. Although the population of the county has increased in the past two decades, employment has remained flat. In 1996, the average annual employment was 42,115 for all jobs, private and public. In 2016, that number was 42,150—a growth rate of fewer than two jobs per year. During that time, the county lost 489 public sector jobs, all of which were state and federal positions, and gained 524 private sector jobs.\(^\text{17}\) Unsurprisingly, given statewide trends, manufacturing has been the hardest hit sector, shedding 1,654 jobs (Figure 21). The construction and “other services” sectors have also lost hundreds of jobs each. The big sectoral winners are health care and social assistance, and accommodations and food services, which saw employment gains of 2,658 and 933 respectively. Even here, though, there was a great deal of fluctuation as the healthcare sector saw the loss of 725 jobs in nursing and residential care facilities.

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\(^\text{16}\) Feeding America, “Map the Meal Gap.”

In Wayne County, the largest sectors by employment are healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, manufacturing, and accommodations and food services (in that order). Compared to the state, sectors based in advanced training or education (such as finance, or professional services) have a smaller share of the county’s employment than in the state.

With one exception (utilities), the average annual pay is lower in Wayne County across all sectors—in some cases, strikingly lower (Figure 22). This is especially true for white collar sectors such as management, finance, information, and professional services. The average annual pay for all private sector employment grew at a slower rate in the county: 9.7% over 20 years ($3,034) compared to 22.6% for the state ($8,716), though of course a great deal of variation exists between industries.\(^\text{18}\) For example, average annual pay for the management sector increased by over $35,000 in North Carolina overall, but fell by $4,000 in the county. Additionally, gaps in pay persist along racial lines. Average monthly earnings for white workers exceed those for black workers across all sectors, while earnings for Asian and Hispanic workers vary highly depending on the sector (see appendix one for more details).

Looking at occupation in addition to industry shifts the focus from an economic perspective (what types of businesses are thriving or not?) to an employee perspective (what sorts of jobs do people do?). An occupational analysis allows for a richer understanding of employee tasks and compensation.

In Wayne County, two occupational groups alone provide 25% of total employment: office and administrative support, and sales. People still make things in the county, with production providing 10% of total employment, though they are more likely to be slaughtering pigs than building engines. Transportation and production occupations constitute a larger share of the economy in Wayne County than in the state overall, while the more “knowledge industry” occupations have a smaller presence.\(^\text{19}\)

Smaller economies are prone to greater volatility in employment and Wayne County is no exception. About half of occupational groups lost employment between 2000 and 2016 (Figure 23). Production, food preparation, and healthcare practitioners and technicians grew the most; management, construction, and transportation and warehousing shrank the most. Growing and shrinking occupations basically balanced each other out, as the county had about as many jobs by occupation in 2016 as 2000.

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For most occupational groups in the county, wages at the median are lower than in the state (Figure 24). The five largest occupational groups by employment, encompassing 54% of total employment in the county, have a median annual wage of less than $30,000. A small-bore examination of specific occupations reveals that over 20,000 jobs pay less at the median than the 2016 Living Income Standard (LIS) for Wayne County—$32,981 for a family consisting of one adult and one child. All jobs in four occupational groups pay less at the median than the LIS; in nine of 22 occupational groups, over half of jobs pay less than the LIS at the median (appendix two).

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20 Kennedy and Sirota, “A Standard Worthy of North Carolina Workers: The 2016 Living Income Standard for 100 Counties.” The Living Income Standard adds up the cost of basic necessities in each county in North Carolina to determine how much families of different sizes require to get by.
Although wages for many workers are insufficient to ensure financial wellbeing, there is a glimmer of good news. Among the occupational groups with the largest employment gains are those that include lower and higher wage occupations that are related in training and function. Occupational groups like healthcare practitioners and technical operations can become the bedrock for an economic development approach that fosters better-paying jobs by building on existing growth. At the same time, if employees in lower-paying jobs can be connected to better jobs (through training, for example), these occupational groups can serve as a bridge to more skilled, higher-paying jobs.

Many workers in Wayne County and Goldsboro are tenuously attached to the labor force. In Goldsboro, the labor force participation rate, which measures workers who are employed or actively searching for a job, is below the county and state rates (55% to 61% (county) and 62% (state)). At 41%, Goldsboro’s employment to population ratio\(^{21}\) is 15 percentage points less than the state’s. Both measures, as well as the unemployment rate, show substantial variation between blacks, whites and Hispanics (Figure 25).

A greater share of workers in North Carolina work full-time, year-round than in Goldsboro. Fifty-five percent of workers in the state work 50-52 weeks per year, and 57% work 35 or more hours per week, compared to Goldsboro’s 47% (year-round) and 52% (full-time) in Goldsboro. Taken together, these indicators suggest that a large portion of the adult population in Goldsboro has dropped out of the labor force or is working part-time or sporadically.

\(^{21}\) The employment to population ratio is the percentage of the civilian, noninstitutionalized population, 16 to 64 years old, that is employed.
In short, poverty in Goldsboro is simply a sign of a larger economic weakness. Low wages and an unstable economy have altered the conditions and nature of work in Goldsboro. Workers without much formal schooling can no longer reliably turn to vanished manufacturing, construction or warehousing jobs that, while they wouldn’t make you rich, kept you solvent. Workers without a high school diploma in particular face limited employment options. The decline of public sector jobs, and turmoil in industries such as management, finance and business, spells bad news for white collar workers. Additionally, the higher-paying industries that might attract more-educated residents are relatively small in Goldsboro, and not sufficient to counterbalance deepening economic adversity. Combined with Goldsboro’s historically high levels of poverty, these factors have—as we’ll describe below—accelerated the concentration of poverty.

Concentrated Poverty, Isolation and Crushing Hardship

Even for people in Goldsboro, even for those who would probably otherwise care about the issue, unless you see a child actually starving, or you see a homeless person, or unless something like that is actually occurring in your family, then poverty is not really a problem in your eyes. In an affluent country like the United States, poverty is hidden. You have to be willing to seek it out, to go and try to understand it. And if you don’t do that, or if you come to poverty, like a lot of people do, with a judgmental attitude, you won’t see it. You won’t really grasp it.

—Shirley Edwards

Poverty in Goldsboro (and in Wayne County) is not evenly distributed. Poor people typically do not live near their wealthier neighbors, but are concentrated in areas that are disproportionately poor. Census tracts, which are often used as proxies for neighborhoods, tell the story. In four of the city’s census tracts—14, 15, 18 and 19—residents must contend with the multiple wrenching conditions that compound individual troubles (Table 1). Our interviews touched on many of these conditions: decrepit environments, absence of places for kids to play or develop, poor schools, violence, toxic amounts of stress and resulting ill health.
Table 1. Distressed census tracts in Goldsboro

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census tract</th>
<th>Poverty rate</th>
<th>Child poverty rate</th>
<th>Unemployment rate</th>
<th>Median household income</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tract 14</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>$25,430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 15</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>$25,303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 18</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>$20,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 19</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>$22,638</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey

One doubts that anyone has worked longer, in more diverse capacities, to address the challenges of poverty in Goldsboro and eastern, North Carolina than Shirley Edwards, now a retired mental health administrator, and principal driver of an earlier innovative Crossroads of Understanding program, who has played strong leadership roles on the governing and operational boards of WAGES (Goldsboro’s principal community action agency), the Salvation Army, the Wayne County Public Library, and a number of other service agencies. Edwards describes the expanding forces of local concentrated poverty this way:

We have about ten big public housing facilities in Wayne County. The poor who live there are separated off, segregated out. That breeds discontent and disconnection. Crime multiplies there because everyone around you is facing difficulty and desperation. Their lack of meaningful and effective education keeps them from being able to escape or even think that they can or that they ought to be able to escape. The lack of real education leads to lousy housing, lousy circumstance, despair and an inability to escape—because they can’t get a good enough job to get out. Most of the crime in Goldsboro happens in these communities. There is a lot of violence, a lot of abuse, a lot of child sexual abuse, a lot of teenage pregnancy. And when you see that happen for four or five generations, it comes to seem insurmountable. But it’s not. Though most folks find it easier to sit in their comfy seats and blame the poor in Goldsboro for being poor.

Tonya Robertson is a teaching assistant who lives in public housing with her six youngest kids, one with special needs. To her great credit, her three oldest children are either in college or have graduated and are working, so they no longer live with her and the younger children. Robertson was married for fifteen years to a military husband. She worked in child care for many years, as she and her husband lived at various posts around the country. Between her income and her husband’s, it was a “good life.” But that changed dramatically with an unanticipated divorce. After the break up, she moved to Goldsboro to be closer to family.

Now she is something she never expected to be—a single parent. With six kids, she needs an apartment with at least four bedrooms. All she can afford is public housing. “All the affordable housing here is terrible and dangerous,” she says. When her husband left, “our kids didn’t understand why they couldn’t go to McDonalds or anywhere else anymore.” Where she lives “there are gun shots all the time, day and night.” Ambulances and the police are “out there all the time.” The day before we spoke, she was home sick and heard gunfire at 10:30 in the morning.

One of the many good things about Dillard Academy, where a couple of her children go to school, is that “the school bus pulls right up to our front door … the regular public school bus only goes down to the corner of the road and that’s too dangerous.” “My day at school starts at 6 a.m., where I teach the babies.” The fact that the bus comes to her doorstep means it’s “safe for my own children to come later.”

Robertson’s goal is to have a yard where her kids have a safe place to play, but that’s not possible, not yet. She wants to get out, but can’t save enough money since she pays a large portion of her paycheck to the housing authority. Her husband ruined her credit, so she has to repair that too. She’s slowly working her way to receiving
a bachelor’s degree in education, but due to the pressures of work and parenthood, her progress is stop and start. But before he died, she promised her brother that she would finish, and she’s sticking to that promise.

Cristine Roper lives a couple of blocks over, in the same complex. She delivers newspapers and has three kids, one of whom, her youngest, was born with a chronic health condition. She wanted a family with the children’s father but he didn’t stick around. She explains she “can’t be with the kids every second, but it’s not safe to let them go outside.” If they do go out, she “watches them like a hawk.”

Roper’s rent is based on her income. Since she’s self-employed, her income fluctuates. If she makes more money, her “rent goes up, so there’s not much incentive,” she says. She wishes she could get out, having been there for over five years. “It’s miserable,” she explains. But she has to live near her parents and this is the only place she can afford in Goldsboro. “I’m trying to avoid having to move back home with my parents,” she says. “It’s hard to be a single mom, particularly with a little one who has special needs, and to still work and have the energy it takes for the kids.” But you do what you have to do. “There are days I just sit there and cry, but I keep going because I have to, I may cry a little, but I pull on my big girl pants and keep going.” She works hard to keep a regular schedule and assure some stability in her home. “We may live in the projects,” she says, “but we don’t have to act like it.”

Reverend Adeen George and her colleagues at HGDC Community Crisis Center serve the Webtown community. She reports there are “hundreds and hundreds of homeless here” and it can be hard for the Center to meet the needs of those even in the immediate vicinity. “We feed 300 souls a week at the soup kitchen, we take folks to the doctor, help them with clothes,” she reports. But in this neighborhood, the danger is intense, “we’ve had more people shot this year.” We have “food programs and programs for young boys, trying to give them things to do, one boy came to our program and two days later he was shot, just here down the street,” she confides, close to tears. Still, Reverend George won’t consider leaving. “I’m determined to focus my life on the command, from the 25th chapter of Matthew, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and house the homeless… nobody’s going to run me out,” she makes clear.

Hilda Hicks, after a distinguished career as a federal administrator and former chairperson of the merged Goldsboro-Wayne County school board, founded Dillard Academy in Goldsboro. She emphasizes that, with the poor kids they serve, it is crucial to reach the children in the circumstances they actually, and presently, experience. All the schools in town want the top 5%, she says. “I want the ones no one else wants.” Hicks learned quickly it was necessary to provide door-to-door transportation for the students to the school. Our kids “get on the bus sometimes after witnessing a murder or a knitting or a rape,” she says, “it has a huge impact on them.” Sometimes they cry and don’t want to go home. “I fear in my heart, some days, when they leave,” she says.

It can be too dangerous to walk home or even to walk two blocks from a bus stop. We provide bus service to the door because we see the dangers. We sometimes change the route or even get the police involved when it’s really bad. Unemployment is really high here. Underemployment too. Our kids are exposed to a much greater level of violence, a much greater level of hunger, a much higher level of abuse than the kids across town. Our children have to be somewhat schizophrenic: they have to develop a playground personality, a home personality, a neighborhood personality, and a school personality. It’s harder to learn if you spend the weekend hearing gunshots.

Danielle Baptiste graduated from Goldsboro High School, UNC Chapel Hill, the widely-lauded North Carolina Teaching Fellow programs, and then served six years in the U.S. Air Force, separating as a captain. Now she is operations director at Dillard Academy. She sees the challenges faced by children living in intense concentrated poverty at close hand:

I take kids home with me sometimes. My son goes here and he expects it. It’s a little like bringing a friend home, but, of course, it’s really more than that. Sometimes the boys just need to come over to relax and sleep and not be terrified. One little boy came over a few weeks ago and said he loved...
being able to relax there and not be scared all the time. … My son knows that a lot of these little boys have a much different life than he does. It bothers him quite a bit. He’s always giving away the money his father and I give him, even though it can be scary in our neighborhood too, we live on the cusp of the ‘hood. [Meaning she can’t get pizza delivered to her house, she said with a laugh.]

On one of the days we were in Goldsboro interviewing Baptiste, after we’d finished our discussions at the school, she followed up with a typically thoughtful message.

After you left I had some students from school spend the night at my house with my son. The four-year-old brother of one of my son’s friends came by and said he wanted to stay with the big boys. I told him it was fine and I talked to his mom. But after he’d been at my house for about a half hour he said he needed to go home. I asked him if the big boys were being mean to him. He said, no, they were fine, but he needed to go home because “my mom doesn’t like to be home alone because they would be shooting out where we live.” I guess I looked upset because his older brother nodded at me and said “yeah, they are shooting a lot more out there now.” I called his mom and she came and picked him up. The next day I found out a teenage boy had been shot down the street from their house that night. It was the third shooting in inner-city Goldsboro that week.

I see first graders, second graders, walking in the streets, in tough, tough neighborhoods at 10 at night, alone. I’ll pick them up sometimes and ask what’s going on. They get no chance to be kids.

We did a program recently with a group of former gang guys. They were doing some work in the community, tattooed up, but serving hot dogs and cokes for the kids, trying to help the community out. We asked the local paper to come do a story and one reporter came. But he asked me if we could send some of our kids back up toward the school, back to the main road, because he was too scared to go into the neighborhood where the kids live.

We had a good team in the local soccer league. When we started winning, people began demanding ID and addresses for the kids, like we were cheating. These kids are almost completely cut off from the broader world. Even people I talk to in Goldsboro say to me, “are you really going over to that side of town? Only troubled kids go to that school.”

Doricia Benton is the director of the Community Soup Kitchen of Goldsboro, which serves about 50,000 meals a year. The kitchen has been feeding and assisting impoverished community members for almost four decades. A remarkable core of volunteers, from local churches, businesses, civic organizations, and, as often occurs in Goldsboro, the Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, sustain their efforts. Benton explains, “most people in Goldsboro don’t see the hardship that our clients endure, they just get slapped around by life.” The shelter, she indicates, “is the safest place in Wayne County for most of them.” Generally, they need more than a hot meal. “Most folks turn away from them, but that doesn’t mean the problems go away… It can be hard to find hope and opportunity,” she explains. A lot of the “kids in this community only really get whatever food they receive at school,” Benton reports.

Janeal Cooper is grateful for the support Benton and her staff provide. Cooper has three kids, ranging in age from four to seventeen. She receives some social security disability support and lives “in the projects.” Housing is very limited, she reports. So are food stamps. She works long hours at minimum wage jobs, “but the kids miss their momma, and our housing area is very dangerous, they don’t have playgrounds or parks,” she says. A seven-month old boy was shot some time before we talked, “it was on the news.” Cooper’s boyfriend and her son saw the killing. “So my kids can’t go outside,” she says. “Cops don’t come in here unless they have groups of three or four,” she indicates. “And we’re also the only white people out here, so my kids get targeted, here and at school,” she sighs.
Transportation to school is also a problem. There’s a school bus, of course, but the stop on Slocumb Street is too dangerous to walk to.

Cooper had a good job with a big solar farm company in nearby Pikeville for many years, but the project was shut down. Unable to find a comparable job, she lost her house, and she and her kids lived in a camper for a couple years, with their dog. “Now the place where we have to live is dangerous and insect-infected,” she says, “my smallest one gets a lot of bites.” They also have to sleep on air mattresses. It’s especially hard for the kids because they’ve known better. And, Cooper reports, “my fear rubs off on my kids.” “I yell at them to get down,” when there are gunshots. “We need more housing that is safe and affordable,” she emphasizes. “Not that long ago, I had a good job and a house. Now I feel hopeless and I wake up dreading every single day.”

Natalie Williams, 48, who also relies on the Community Soup Kitchen, echoes Cooper’s worries over safety. “There were a lot of issues where I used to live relating to drugs and alcohol,” she explains. “The summertime is the worst because Goldsboro doesn’t offer programs for teens like it used to, there’s less summer recreation.” South Slocumb Street is terrible, she reports—“on a Sunday afternoon recently a teenage boy was shot to death. Everybody, including the kids, are scared to go out in the streets.” Born and raised in Goldsboro, Williams lost her job two years ago and has had a difficult time since then obtaining work and housing. She is now homeless, without work or health insurance. There are few shelter resources available for women, she reports.

**The Growth of Concentrated Poverty**

Place has a hand in the creation and perpetuation of poverty. Neighborhoods characterized by concentrated poverty exact a toll on all residents, in addition to the hardships generated by individual circumstances. These neighborhoods often lack jobs, parks and playgrounds, sidewalks, grocery stores, investment of all stripes, safe and affordable housing, access to social capital and civic belonging, quality schools. What they do have is a plethora of negative features: crime, violence, environmental toxins, neglect.

The cumulative impact of poor neighborhoods not only places an additional burden on residents of those areas, they drag down the larger community in which they are located through, among other things, a reduced tax base, loss of business development, foregone opportunities, high poverty schools, increased local government spending, and civic mistrust. Higher levels of racial segregation have been shown to be associated with lower incomes for black residents, lower educational attainment for both whites and blacks, and lower levels of safety for everyone.23

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In Goldsboro, historical decisions, such as the siting of public housing, have rooted poverty in certain places, but economic decline and the expansion of the number of poor people have led to concentrated poverty gaining greater depth and breadth. Since 2000, the number of poor people living in poor neighborhoods in Wayne County has increased dramatically. Researchers have found that neighborhood poverty becomes a potent influence on residents’ lives when it reaches a tipping point of about 20% poverty. As a result, we use that measure here and refer to these census tracts as “high poverty tracts.”

In 2000, about one in five census tracts in the county was a high poverty tract. By 2016, over half of all tracts were high poverty tracts and two tracts were greater than 40% poor. Slightly over 15,000 poor people lived in Wayne County in 2000; in sixteen years, that number shot up to over 26,000. The county-wide poverty rate went from 14% in 2000 to 22% during that same period.

As indicated, poverty is growing faster in high poverty areas. In 2000, 15,234 people (14% of the total county population) and 4,557 poor people (30% of poor people) lived in a high poverty tract. In 2016, over 63,000 people (52% of the total county population) and almost 20,000 poor people (73% of poor people) lived in a high poverty tract (Figures 26 and 27). Between 2000 and 2016, the number of poor people in the county climbed 75%, but the number of poor people living in a high poverty tract increased over 300%.

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25 All data on poverty and race in this section comes from the 2000 Census and the 2012-2016 American Community Survey.
Very few people in 2000 lived in a census tract that was 40% or more poor (very high poverty tract). One tract, census tract 17 (now part of tract 20), was a very high poverty tract and only 412 people lived there, 182 of whom were poor. By 2016, the number of people in very high poverty tracts had increased exponentially. The two census tracts that were very high poverty in 2016 contained almost 7,000 people altogether and 2,813 poor people. As Figure 28 shows, this is 5.7% of the county’s total population and 10.6% of all its poor people—a staggering growth rate in a relatively short time.
As the graphs above suggest, concentrated poverty has a distinctly racial dimension. Although all racial and ethnic groups (that are large enough to measure with any degree of accuracy) have experienced an increase in both overall poverty and concentrated poverty, Wayne County’s black and Hispanic residents are far more likely to live in a poor neighborhood than their white counterparts. About 70% of African American and Hispanic county residents, regardless of income, lived in a high poverty census tract in 2016, compared to about 40% of white residents (although the rate for whites was seven times larger in 2016 than in 2000). Eighty-nine percent of impoverished black residents lived in a high poverty tract, as did 80% of poor Hispanics, compared to 47% of poor whites.

Almost 5,000 African Americans lived in a very high poverty tract in 2016, three times more than whites and 26 times more than Hispanics. Seventy percent of inhabitants of very high poverty tracts were black. About 13% of all African Americans in the county, and 20% of poor African Americans, lived in a very high poverty tract.

The rapid rise in the number of poor Hispanics is also striking, though somewhat distorted by the fact that the county population was very small in 2000 (just over 5,000 inhabitants). In 2000, the Hispanic poverty rate in the county was the highest of the major racial/ethnic groups at 28%; in 2016, it was still the highest, climbing to about 50%. Between 2000 and 2016, the total Hispanic population grew by 160%, but the number of poor Hispanics grew 357%. The number of Hispanics of any income who lived in a high poverty tract rose by an astonishing 4,700% between 2000 and 2016 (from 197 to 9,457); the number of poor Hispanics in high poverty tracts saw a jaw-dropping 5,367% increase (97 to 5,303). By 2016, Hispanic poverty was deepening and concentrating in some of Wayne County’s poorest census tracts. Additionally, pockets of Hispanic poverty could be found in better-off tracts throughout the county.

Unsurprisingly, the poorest census tracts in 2016 were heavily black and Hispanic (Table 2). Although whites are the majority of the county population, 10 of the 15 high poverty tracts are heavily nonwhite. Of census tracts that are majority white, the highest poverty rate is 22.5%—not great, but about 20 percentage points less than the tract with the worst poverty rate overall. Conversely, of the eleven census tracts in the county that are not high poverty, all are majority white.
The influence of neighborhood, and residential segregation, on life outcomes is especially stark for kids. One prominent study found that children who moved from a low-income to a higher-income area were more likely, on average, to earn more as adults, attend college and not get pregnant outside marriage. Every year spent in a better neighborhood was correlated with improved outcomes as an adult.

A related study found that children who grow up in Wayne County are far less likely to climb the economic ladder than kids who grow up elsewhere. A poor kid who spends all of his or her childhood in Goldsboro will, at 26, have an annual household income that is $3,150 less than average. This puts Wayne County’s mobility rate in the bottom 5% of counties nationally. Researchers have found that places that had low rates of upward mobility shared five characteristics: more segregation by income and race, more income inequality, worse schools, higher rates of violent crime, and a smaller share of two-parent households—features that are present to some degree in Goldsboro.

### Housing Challenges

A shortage of widely dispersed, secure and affordable housing is a main contributor to concentrated poverty. Almost everyone we interviewed talked about the critical need for safe, habitable and affordable housing. Good, suitably-sized, reasonably-priced housing is hard to come by. Generally, housing in Goldsboro is older and smaller than is typical for the state. Over 4,500 units were built before 1960. As recognized by the city’s 2014 Consolidated Plan, hundreds of housing units in Goldsboro have no heat source, lack complete kitchen or plumbing facilities, or are overcrowded. A report issued by the University of North Carolina identifies seven census tracts in the county as exhibiting “extreme” housing conditions (cost-burdened, overcrowded, or lacking in necessary facilities). And housing costs, which are relatively high in a place where incomes have faltered, strain many residents’ budgets. Forced to pay more for less, low income Goldsboro residents are channeled into less desirable neighborhoods where housing, while at least nominally possible, is often subpar and dangerous.

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28. Goldsboro’s share of housing that is 40 years old or more is 62%, the state’s is 40%. While 66% of the state’s housing stock has three or more bedrooms, only 53% of Goldsboro’s is that large. 2012-2016 American Community Survey, DP04.
30. In Goldsboro, 1.2% of renter-occupied housing units lack plumbing facilities (.5% for the state) and 2.9% lack kitchen facilities (1.2% for state). 2012-2016 American Community Survey, DP04.
31. 365 housing units in Goldsboro (2.6%) contain more than one occupant per room, an indication of overcrowding. 2012-2016 American Community Survey, B25014.
Transportation, or the lack thereof, also complicates decisions about where to live. Having a car provides broader options, but is expensive. Housing and transportation together take up 59% of the typical household income in the region. For the many households in Goldsboro who make less than $30,000, housing and transportation threaten to claim almost all income. It is no shock then that a large share of households in both the county and Goldsboro lack access to a vehicle (8% and 16%, respectively, to the state’s 6%). In five census tracts (7, 14, 15, 18 and 19)—four of which are in central Goldsboro—the share of households without access to a vehicle tops 20%. For these households, housing choices are constrained by location and access to services and employment, further limiting them to a few, high poverty neighborhoods.

In Goldsboro, most households rent. Although rental rates are higher among African Americans (81%) and Hispanics (71%), rental rates for white households exceed 50%. Homeownership may not be for everybody but such high renter rates mean that many in Goldsboro never have the chance to build equity or accrue the other advantages that come with owning your own home.

Since renters predominate in Goldsboro—and the number of housing units has fallen by almost 3,000 in the last seven years—scarcity and demand may drive costs. Housing allowances for military personnel stationed at Seymour Johnson enable landlords to ask for higher rents, pushing them up past amounts local residents can bear. About 80% of air force personnel and their families live off base, tightening the rental market. As rents at the higher end increase, they create a ripple effect that pushes up rents on smaller or less desirable units.

The median gross rent in Goldsboro is higher than in most neighboring counties and towns. With the exception of Johnston County, where housing costs may be driven by proximity to Wake County and Raleigh, median gross rent in Wayne County is higher than in any surrounding county. Similarly, the median rent in Goldsboro is higher than in nearby municipalities (Table 3). Between 2000 and 2016, median rent in Goldsboro increased almost 14%, a steeper rate than either the county (9.0%) or the state (1.5%).

Table 3. Median gross rent in neighboring counties and municipalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Median gross rent</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Median gross rent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sampson</td>
<td>$598</td>
<td>Warsaw</td>
<td>$522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greene</td>
<td>$627</td>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>$589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duplin</td>
<td>$637</td>
<td>Mount Olive</td>
<td>$652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenoir</td>
<td>$676</td>
<td>Kinston</td>
<td>$667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson</td>
<td>$711</td>
<td>Wilson</td>
<td>$722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne</td>
<td>$727</td>
<td>Goldsboro</td>
<td>$738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnston</td>
<td>$787</td>
<td>Selma</td>
<td>$823</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey

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34 2012-2016 American Community Survey, DP04.
35 In 2009, the total number of housing units was 18,895; in 2016, it was 15,940. 2005-2009 and 2012-2016 American Community Survey, B25002.
37 Pitchford, “Seymour Johnson Air Force Base Is Praised for Resiliency during Gala.”
This combination of factors means that the majority of renters in Goldsboro dedicate more of their income to rent than is considered affordable (30% or more is unaffordable). Over two-thirds of Hispanic renters spend over 30% of their income on rent, along with over half of black renters and 37% of white renters. Almost 2,000 households in Goldsboro spend half or more of their income on rent, including 28% of black renters.39

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, a renter in Wayne County must earn $26,840 annually in order to afford monthly fair market rent for a two-bedroom unit.40 For a worker earning minimum wage, this means working almost two full-time jobs. Since the median household income for renter households in Goldsboro is $24,180, over half of renter households don’t make enough to afford even a modest dwelling.

Because of the paucity of adequate, affordable housing in the private market, public housing serves an essential role. In 2016, almost 4,000 people in Goldsboro lived in housing subsidized by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), ranking it in the top 3% of U.S. cities. About 10.5% of the city’s total population lives in subsidized housing, perhaps the highest subsidy rate for a medium to large-sized town in North Carolina.41

Many of housing assistance recipients reside in public housing, which is clustered in the center of Goldsboro in one of five census tracts (14, 15, 18, 19 and 20). This spatial arrangement reinforces the concentration of poverty and diminishes the prospects of the people who live there (Table 4).

Table 4. Percent of residents receiving housing assistance, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census tract</th>
<th>Number of people in subsidized housing</th>
<th>Percent of population in subsidized housing</th>
<th>Percent of population in public housing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Census Tract 14</td>
<td>1,498</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census Tract 15</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census Tract 18</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census Tract 19</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census Tract 20</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PolicyMap

Despite the uncommon amount of subsidized housing in Goldsboro, it has failed to keep pace with need. In 2000, 74 affordable and adequate units existed for every 100 extremely low income (ELI) households (an ELI household makes no more than 30% of area median income). By 2016, the number of qualifying units had dropped to 72 per 100 ELI households. While the number of HUD-assisted units has increased, they have failed to keep pace with the rise in ELI households, which jumped 98% (or by 3,000 households) between 2000 and 2016 (Figure 29).

39 2015 American Community Survey Selected Population Tables, B25070.
40 National Low Income Housing Coalition, National Low Income Housing Coalition, “Out of Reach 2017: North Carolina.”
41 PolicyMap analysis of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development data.
Figure 29. Number of affordable housing units to number of extremely low income households

Source: Urban Institute

Although their circumstances are often less straitened than they are for renters, homeowners also face excessive housing costs. At the median, those with a mortgage in Goldsboro pay about 90% of the statewide amount ($1,133 to $1,243) and those without a mortgage actually pay more ($411 to $376). Additionally, the median monthly housing costs for Hispanic and black homeowners are higher in Goldsboro than in North Carolina (Figure 30). This is striking because median home values and the quality of the housing stock suggest that costs should be lower, not higher, than the state. However, given low incomes, it is not surprising that a significant share of homeowners, 27%, are saddled with unaffordable housing costs.

Figure 30. Median monthly housing costs for homeowners by race and ethnicity

Source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey Special Population Table

42 2012-2016 American Community Survey,
43 2012-2016 American Community Survey, 35% to 28% for homeowners with a mortgage, 16% to 13% for those without.
Minority homeowners in Goldsboro face other obstacles in addition to high housing costs. The homeownership rate for African Americans fell 19% between 2000 and 2016, compared to 6% for whites. One possible reason for this steep plunge is the stunningly high rate at which African American borrowers in Goldsboro received high-cost home loans.\(^{44}\) Between 2004 and 2009, the high-cost home loan rate for African Americans was 3 to 6 times higher than for whites. In some census tracts—particularly 14, 15 and 18—the rate soared over 50% year after year. Even as lenders sobered up after the recession, black borrowers have continued to receive high-cost loans at greater rates than white borrowers (Figure 31).

**Figure 31. Percent of high-cost home loans made to borrowers in Goldsboro, by race, 2010-2015**

![Graph showing high-cost home loans made to borrowers in Goldsboro, by race, 2010-2015](source)

Borrowers who received a high-cost loan in the past were more likely to default and lose their homes.\(^{45}\) This stripped households of wealth, especially in minority neighborhoods, and forced many families to enter the rental market. Additionally, home loan applicants in Goldsboro who are African American are denied at twice the rate as whites.\(^{46}\) As a result, these households also remain involuntary renters. Because the path to homeownership is fraught and possibly barred for many African Americans in Goldsboro, they are unable to build up equity and instead struggle to stay afloat in a challenging rental market, joining other renters in competition for housing.

For African Americans and Hispanics who succeed in purchasing a home, it is often valued less than homes owned by whites. The median value of white-owned homes in Goldsboro is about 40% more than those owned by African Americans and Hispanics, despite the fact that the median home value for whites actually dropped by 17% (or $28,000) in the past few years (Figure 32).

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\(^{44}\) High-cost loans are defined as loans with a rate spread higher than with prime loans. The exact calculation depends on what type of loan it is, when it was taken out, etc.

\(^{45}\) Bocian, Li, and Ernst, “Foreclosures by Race and Ethnicity.”

Because wealth for most households derives from home equity, shrinking home values and fewer homeowners translates directly into lower wealth, for individuals and communities. Wealth, even more than income, is a driver of opportunity. Households with little or no equity have less money to draw on for pursuing an education, starting a business, supporting retirement or giving the next generation a head start. Stymied at every turn—by steep rents, denied home loans, subprime lenders, reduced home values—African Americans in particular have faced a tougher climb to acquiring significant (or any) wealth through homeownership, blocking mobility and continuing the poverty cycle.

"People either can’t get [housing] or we group them all together into substandard facilities, where everyone else is struggling with poverty’s challenges. The poor families start to think they don’t deserve better. Like that’s what their lives are meant to be." – Shirley Edwards

**The Centrality of Effective Education for All**

It may be that the loss and marginalization of, the “relegation” of a significant, if often troubled or jeopardized segment of the community, is the core of Goldsboro’s economic and social challenge. Looking broadly, and over the arc of time, that is how Shirley Edwards sees it: “until education is offered to every child exactly as if he was our own,” she explains, “we are going to be plagued with poverty, crime, poor health, hunger and homelessness.”

The largest ongoing cause of entrenched poverty in Wayne County, I’m certain, is the lack of a quality education being offered and meaningfully directed to every child. This is the county of Charles B. Aycock, the education governor of North Carolina. Of course Aycock was also the racist and white supremacist governor of North Carolina. Poor people in Wayne County have actually never had a high-quality education. Never. And that affects everything else. The impact is layered here, year after year and generation after generation. Schoolhouses have had their doors open, but there was no real quality education for every student offered. It has meant that the poor in this county have never been offered the real chance that they deserve.
A decent education system just doesn’t say “some of these kids are problems or they are having difficulties so I won’t deal with them, I’ll just teach the rest.” A good system tries to reach every one of them. I’ve been in the schools a lot, for many, many years. The truth is we lose perhaps 25% of them. We expect to lose them and it doesn’t matter to us. And then they act out, and create problems, and then they have kids of their own and we end up doing the same thing over and over again. By the age of 18 a lot of them are expelled, or gone, or checked out completely. And then we just blame them. The teachers blame them, the principals blame them. It’s been happening in Goldsboro for generations. And the absence of a high-quality education for all is linked to every single aspect of what we think of as poverty here—jobs, housing, health, crime, alienation, violence.

As it stands now, too often, Edwards believes, “we have a perception in the schools and in the community at large that you can do anything you want to poor people because they can’t fight back, they can’t do anything to stop it.”

Edwards conclusions are echoed by another longtime Goldsboro public servant and advocate for the poor, Pat Yates, former director of Literacy Connections of Wayne County. Yates’ life has been committed to Goldsboro’s “second chance” students. “There is every reason for this place to be better off than it is, given its resources: the river, the air force, the train,” she says. Yates’ theory, moved to the language of her own discipline, is that “the underlying cause of the wrenching problems of Wayne County is low literacy.” For “literacy,” unsurprisingly, Yates adopts a bolder, more encompassing definition: “the ability to function effectively in the world.” In the old days, in Goldsboro, “real literacy wasn’t really necessary to get a decent job,” she says. Good, family-sustaining jobs weren’t dependent on those sorts of skills. But that’s all changed. Now Seymour Johnson Air Force Base is not only the largest aggregate employer in the county, but all the workers that serve the base, and, then, she adds, all the federal, state and city and county employers, and the 68 manufacturing companies in the area, “all these jobs require analysis, language and technical skills.” But, Yates adds, one in ten adults in Wayne County is completely illiterate; one in four reads below the third-grade level, almost 60% read below a high school level.

This creates, in her view, a sense among many low-income residents that they’re “stuck in Goldsboro,” while the children of many of the more affluent locals end up leaving eastern North Carolina. “We end up exporting a lot of folks who could probably make things better,” she concludes. And the county has been comfortable “keeping people in their boundaries, leaving them illiterate and disempowered.” She continues, “There is a strong sense of isolation, one person, one group, from the other… I’ve got mine, that’s the end of the issue for me.” The people of influence and resources often prefer not to talk about it, she says. “They don’t really want other people to talk about it either.”

Shirley Edwards knows well the challenges faced by children in Goldsboro’s neighborhoods and housing areas with the greatest concentrations of poverty. The dangers, the stress, the perils, the hunger. Some have “little real family support to give them the encouragement and assistance they need.” We know, she says, that a lot of our kids are in a different position. “It isn’t that they can’t learn, or don’t want to learn; in a real way, they never got the opportunity,” she says. “They don’t have parents who will read to them, they don’t have safe places to study, they don’t have books, much less computers in their homes, and they don’t have enough to eat,” she observes. All told, it can become almost impossible to prosper. A lot of teachers across the school system “resent that they have to teach these kids, instead of just the top ones.” They complain that “they are left with the problem kids.”

Dr. Thomas Smith, a behavioral specialist at Dillard Academy, with a doctorate in human resource development and a 35-year career in the Air Force, much of it as a Command Chief Master Sergeant, explains that you “have to meet poor, often-threatened children where they are, otherwise you are just presenting another barrier.” He says he chooses to work in these tough communities because “I believe in doing as much as humanly possible for the students who need us the very most.” Their teachers “have to look at the whole array of difficulties these children face,” he explains, “and they have to convince the kids that getting an education is more important to them than all the barriers they see every day.” It’s a tough assignment, Smith notes. “We attempt to teach them how to survive,
and thrive, in their own trying circumstance,” he says. Dr. Smith, who is a trauma specialist, sees it as an example of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs in operation: first make sure they have safety, belonging, nutrition, clothing, support, he says. “Then maybe they’ll be ready to learn something.” But you have to look at the whole child. It doesn’t work “to ignore the fact that a student has had to walk past the victim of a shooting to get back to school,” he emphasizes.

Danielle Baptiste indicated that not long before classes ended in June of the previous year, a teacher came by to ask her if it would be permissible to braid one of her (third grade) student’s hair. The teacher said the young girl “seemed like she was falling apart.” She had asked if it was possible to get some snacks to take home to her little sister. She had been there for several years and never made a request like that, so it seemed odd. Baptiste asked if the little girl would like to talk to the counselor, but the teacher said the student really did not want anybody to know what she was going through.

As it turned out, the girl’s mother had lost her job and now the family was homeless. The mom was working at a hotel and they could sometimes stay in a room there. But the student was worried people would find out and got nervous when the bus driver would drop her off after school. The school’s bus monitor eventually went in to check on her. The girls had no food. The school’s staff called the mom and she came in to meet with their support folks. She explained the whole story, including the fact that they had been evicted and had no fixed place to live.

Dillard helped her with social services and extra food. But the mother was adamant to support five girls, come what may, and she was determined to never let them be split up. The school helped them get stabilized, but the teachers feared for what would occur in the upcoming summer months. Baptiste reported that it was “not as uncommon a situation with a lot of our parents as I wish it was.” And she wonders what would happen to kids like this wonderful little girl if her teachers weren’t able to pay close attention and, on occasion, intervene.

**Racial and Economic Segregation in Schools**

Race and economic status correlate almost perfectly in Wayne County Public Schools, mirroring and reinforcing patterns of residential and economic segregation. The public schools with the highest poverty rates also have the largest percentage of minority students. The reverse is true too: public schools with the lowest poverty rates have the smallest percentage of minority students. None of the public schools in the district that are majority minority have a poverty rate below 50%. The school with the lowest poverty rate, the Wayne School of Engineering, also has the smallest share of black and Hispanic students—and is also the only school in the district with a school performance grade of A.

Schools are often considered high poverty when 75% or more of students are poor. In the typical high poverty public school in Wayne County, 85% of students are black and Hispanic, but only 12% are white (Figure 33). In contrast, in the typical low poverty school (50% or fewer students are poor), 62% of students are white and 32% are black and Hispanic. The percentage of black students who attend a high poverty school is about five times the percentage for white students (34% to 7%) (Figure 34).
Although school attendance zones can be drawn to reduce segregation, that has not happened in Wayne County. Instead, attendance zones recreate the segregation that exists in the underlying neighborhood. Additionally, as residential patterns shift, more white families have opted out of public schools altogether, with the result that neighborhood schools become poorer and less white than their neighborhood. Research shows that as the share of nonwhite students in neighborhood schools increases, more white families move away, fueling the cycle even further.

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47 Chang, “We Can Draw School Zones to Make Classrooms Less Segregated. This Is How Well Your District Does.”
48 In 2016, 21,585 children from the ages of 5 to 17, lived in Wayne County. Wayne County Public Schools reported an average daily membership of 18,321 for the 2016-17 school year. This suggests that approximately 3,200 students have opted out of the public school system. 2012-2016 American Community Survey, B09001 and North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, “Average Daily Membership,” http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/fbs/accounting/data/
49 Chang, “We Can Draw School Zones to Make Classrooms Less Segregated.” See also, Saporito and Sohoni, “Mapping Educational Inequality.”
The overlap between race and poverty in the Wayne Public Schools district presents additional challenges for students and the schools they attend. Much of the so-called racial gap in student achievement stems from socioeconomic factors like segregation and parental income. High poverty schools have fewer resources, fewer parents with time and money to spare, and fewer good teachers. They spend more time on remediation and less time recognizing or developing exceptional students. They don’t offer the same array of classes. Students may come and go as a result of disruptions in their lives. Poignantly, isolated as they are, they see no one who is different from them. As one person we spoke to remembered, this is not like the “old days” when she went to school in Goldsboro. Then, although the schools were “troubled,” “there were still doctors’ and lawyers’ kids there. That doesn’t happen now.”

As students proceed through Wayne County Public Schools, they fall farther behind grade level. In third grade, students are only 0.2 grades behind, but by 8th grade they’re 0.7 grades behind. The typical student’s test scores grow by 4.5 grade levels in five years. This may expose shortcomings in the schools or demonstrate the difficulty schools face in overcoming student disadvantage. Whatever the explanation, students are denied the full benefits of a rigorous education.

In Wayne County Public Schools, the schools that are the most racially and economically segregated also have among the highest suspension rates. Of the seven public schools that reported the most short-term suspensions in the 2015-16 school year, all but one are high poverty and predominantly minority. Black students were suspended 67% of the time, compared to 18% for white students: a suspension rate that is roughly twice the proportion of African American students in the school district, and about half the proportion of white students. Students who have been suspended fare worse on end of year exams and are more likely to drop out.

The effects of poverty, segregation and race appear in Goldsboro’s educational attainment levels. Wayne County Public Schools graduate students at a lower rate than the state (Figure 35). About 84% of students acquire their high school diploma on time; for economically disadvantaged students that rate is 82%. Hispanic students and students with limited English proficiency graduate at far lower rates: 75% and 35% respectively.

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51 Rothstein, “Modern Segregation.”
52 Badger, “How Effective Is Your School District?”
53 North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Consolidated Data Reports, 2015-16, http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/research/discipline/reports/.
County residents are less likely to continue their education after high school than the general state population. Almost half of adults over the age of 25 in the county have no more than a high school diploma or GED. This is the case for about 72% of Hispanics, 51% of blacks and 40% of whites.\textsuperscript{55} And while it could be argued that these numbers represent the educational aspirations of an older generation that didn’t see the need to continue their education past high school, estimates for the current crop of younger adults, ages 18 to 24, are actually slightly worse.\textsuperscript{56}

One reason for this might be a school system that fails to adequately support and prepare its students. While anecdotal, we heard tell of bullying in school, of students graduating with little to no skills and of undiagnosed learning disabilities. The consensus seemed to be, “The education system is no good for low income families. There is more money in the white schools and they are better.” As another interviewee stated succinctly, “The school systems have gotten better for people who can afford them and worse for people who can’t.”\textsuperscript{57}

Poor school quality can leave a stamp that lasts a lifetime, undermining future earnings and success. By all accounts, public schools in Wayne County have their hands full: interviewees related how unemployment and underemployment, violence, hunger, incarceration, substance abuse and parents who are themselves high school dropouts take their toll on the educational prospects of many students. But concentrating students in high poverty schools, as they are concentrated in high poverty neighborhoods, deprives them of one of the surest means of escaping poverty—a sound education. The parents we spoke to recognized this. As one of them put it, “education for my kids is everything.”

\textsuperscript{55} 2016 ACS 5 year estimates, C15002.
\textsuperscript{56} Forty-nine percent of adults age 18-24 in Wayne County have no more than a high school diploma or GED compared to 46% of adults 25 years and older. 2012-2016 American Community Survey, S1501.
\textsuperscript{57}
Resilience and Heart

If an examination of some of the challenges of isolating, concentrated poverty in Goldsboro reveals intense hardship and indignity, it must be said that it also illuminates inspiring examples of resilience, courage and stunning selflessness. No cascade of tragedy nor torrent of disadvantage seems capable of diminishing the determination and resolve of Tonya Robertson—whose eyes, smile and bearing reveal, perhaps, more strength and soul and depth than any I’ve ever witnessed. No wound or torment of “the projects” seems capable of forcing Cristine Roper to succumb to the desperation that regularly surrounds her. Janeal Cooper’s fears for her kids are real, but they are ultimately surpassed by an attachment to her family and its future remains the stoutest feature of her life. Natalie Williams continues to fight, despite past failures and shortcomings, and despite barriers of circumstance and social predisposition, because, she notes, she’s not a quitter and believes she, and her daughter, can fashion an enhanced and more comfortable and ennobling life.

In a sense, the selflessness of those who struggle, against odds, and against ease, and societal acclaim, and self-benefit to “lighten and enrich the lives of their fellows” is even more difficult to fully digest and encapsulate. Adeen George and her broad circle of allies-in-service at the HGDC Community Crisis Center have dedicated their lives to the often-struggling and jeopardized Webtown community for nearly four decades. Sylvia Barnes of the Wayne County NAACP puts it like this: “everything they do at the Center is done in love.” Reverend George gave up her “day job and retirement plan, to work the toughest streets of Goldsboro decades ago.” Her husband thought she had lost her mind. Instead, she had determined to take seriously, and literally, the New Testament commands of service to the impoverished and rejected. Hundreds report that Reverend George and the Crisis Center staff have actually, not figuratively, saved their lives. “I’m 77,” she says. “I had a stroke in 2005, I know I’m going to die over here.” But at the Crisis Center they feed, still, over 300 broken souls a week. Her motto, unsurprisingly, is from the Psalms: “they that sow in tears shall reap in joy.” Reverend George doesn’t get discouraged, having “already cried all [her] tears.”

Doricia Benton, who runs the Community Soup Kitchen, pushes back against hardship that many find hard to endure. Inspiring hundreds of volunteers to serve thousands of their sisters and brothers, she says, for her, it is simple. “We make it too complicated really. I think we’re all meant to help each other,” she says. If you have the “goods and the food and the resources, why not share them?” she asks. “The gifts don’t belong to me,” she says, “I hold them in trust.” So, she gives the hard pressed a card, with her personal phone number. They ring her up at all hours, usually needing more than just a hot meal. Besides, “food shouldn’t be seen as an incentive or a punishment,” she explains. “It ought to be a blessing.” As one of those Benton serves told us:

She believes in us even when we don’t believe in ourselves. There were many days when we wished we were dead, but Ms. Benton’s prayers brought us through. She seen something in us we didn’t see in ourselves. She seen the best in us. Looking back, we are truly grateful that God placed her in our lives. The seeds [she] planted came up like wild flowers. She is our Good Shepherd. She gives us hope.

Or the remarkable Pat Yates, dedicated to the literally separated and marginalized—those unable to read, or to read in English. Yates’ pupils, or perhaps her disciples, include homegrown residents who have struggled for years with functional illiteracy as well as her “international folks,” often from burgeoning Haitian or Latino or Chinese communities in the county. As a newly reading 62-year-old former school janitor, originally from Warsaw, North Carolina, explained to me, “there are no teachers in this world like Ms. Pat … without her Goldsboro is not good for a lot of people like us.”
Yates struggles against the complacency she sees in the broader community. The broken families, the intense poverty, the pregnancies, the isolation of those unable to take advantage of the possibilities readily available to others: “These are Wayne County’s nasty little secret,” Yates says. There are over 500 churches in Wayne County, she reminds. “Imagine what could happen if each one of those churches adopted just one of these struggling families,” she chides. “We need to hold each other accountable,” she argues, “we all have a debt of responsibility.” Jesus said the poor will always be with us, Yates reports, “but he didn’t say we ought to take out the boot and push them down.”

Or Danielle Baptiste, working at Dillard Academy, with the students few others seem to want. “When I was in the Air Force,” she notes, “I felt like I was doing a lot to serve my country, but it was nothing like the service I’m doing here.” When she sees “the light come on in these kids’ eyes, it moves my soul.” Baptiste grew up just across the road from Dillard’s tough surroundings. “When I’m able to help one of these troubled kids, who may be homeless or traumatized, it gives my life meaning,” she explains. It wears her out sometimes, she concedes, but not often. “I enjoy it and am inspired by it, my husband is great, when it’s tough we have a date night,” she says. It bothers their son, sometimes, to see the life many of his classmates have, but he’s generous too. Having teachers who care “is especially important for our population, the kids know immediately who really cares about them, the parents do too,” she says. They have to believe you care about their kids like they do—“they can see right through you,” she reports.

And then there’s Shirley Edwards. Her charge is “to try to assure these little girls and boys get the chance they deserve.” It would be a lot easier, Edwards recognizes, “to sit on my comfortable couch and blame the poor for their shortcomings, like most folks I know do.” But if we could fully educate a lot of these kids, she says, “we could save them.” Children want to learn. They want to do better, to be better. “Some may be slower to get there,” she says, “but it’s in all of us as human beings.” No one is determined like Shirley Edwards.

I get beaten on the head about all this every single day. But I keep coming. I like everybody. I love many. We could defeat poverty here in Wayne County. It’s possible. Schools sometimes have to do what parents aren’t able to do. In some ways the folks around here who are educated and doing well end up perpetuating the poverty – by the way they treat poor people, at the church, at the county and city governments. These are people who ought to know better.

This work has cost me, to be honest. I gave up everything to my work at Crossroads. I was married then. My husband used to say, “don’t bring those AIDS people into my house or let them ride in my car.” We disagreed. He said, “don’t bring those little hoodlums into my house.” We got a divorce. It cost me a marriage. My daughters were raised without a father. I had to drop out of my doctoral program.

But I was inspired by my grandfather. He was a white man who loved poor people. His family had some resources. He called me “baby.” He put me up in his tractor seat and we’d drive out to people’s places on Friday to bring them food. He’d give me a bag of candy and we’d go around. He was kind to everyone. He never looked down his nose at anyone. He was my hero his whole life. I followed him around. I’ve seen preachers curse and shoot at each other – he’d talk things over with them and help work things out. He never faltered. He died at 105.

When he was dying he said, “I hear the singing in my head, the most beautiful music I ever heard.” Then he passed away. I’ve always tried to emulate him. He had tragedies. Some of his kids died. He told me, “baby, the hardest thing that can happen to you is to see your kids die.” No matter how bad things get, I think of him and I go on with the work.
I have no deep sense that the church will do anything. But the church is in me. It is habitual. I believe in God, Christ strengthens me. I know we can do these things. I’m a walking, living miracle. I grew up in worship. Prince Charles has nothing to compare with it. That all meant I had to work hard to give back. Otherwise I would have turned into an arrogant little girl. And I couldn’t have that.

Amen.

Recommendations

Poverty researchers often employ the language of deprivation and exigency to alarm, shame, galvanize—or simply to inform. We’re guilty of this too. In so doing, we risk obscuring much of the good that exists. Even the poorest places have committed public servants, zealous community advocates, supportive social networks, selfless nonprofits, inspiring church pastors, generous neighbors and the like. Goldsboro is no exception. It is blessed with an inspiring cadre of dedicated citizens, some operating in professional or political capacity, some in more personal roles. They are the cornerstones of the community and a necessary catalyst for change to occur.

The energy and abundant good will that exists in Goldsboro should be more successfully organized and coordinated. A plethora of small nonprofits, that may fail within a year or two, can lead to burn-out and easily consumed, or wasted, efforts. Goldsboro should assess community need in order to more successfully organize and manage services. Community leaders should seek to ensure that newly developed non-profits are necessary and not duplicative. This may also help to assure the needed financial assistance to the non-profit entities, new and old, which are most helpful in meeting the challenges and unfolding demands of the city.

The poverty and economic hardship experienced in Goldsboro is formidable and long-standing. It affects the entire city, in the broadest terms. It is also heavily concentrated in particular neighborhoods and is often intensely racialized. It touches an endless array of crucial topics—education, safe and affordable housing, food insecurity, access to health care, income mobility and meaningful opportunity, community engagement and political involvement, criminal law enforcement and the sense of full civic membership and equality. The challenges are too large and multifaceted to be considered as the appropriate concerns of only one group of cadre of municipal leaders. We recommend, therefore, the creation of a broad ranging poverty and economic opportunity task force, not unlike the diverse and mission-driven committee, or set of committees, developed in Charlotte in recent years. Full buy-in by the public, private, religious, educational, non-profit, commercial and activist sectors is essential. Particular sub-committees might look at the most notable, if intersecting, challenges. The challenges Goldsboro faces are sufficiently intense to merit a broadly organized, but passionate and all-hands-on deck approach. Work should begin as soon and as widely as possible. And particular focus should be had on the plight of the poorest members of the community.

It is also clear that the consistent restriction of state-based health, employment, education, and family and social benefits programs has a potently disproportionate impact on Goldsboro, Wayne County and much of eastern North Carolina. Limitations on health care, unemployment compensation, food support, state educational parity programs, housing and child care support, and the like work particular hardship in communities experiencing pervasive and even chronic economic distress. The yawning gap between North Carolina’s thriving principal metropolitan areas and its smaller urban and rural communities also challenges the ability of Goldsboro to prosper. To have a more meaningful chance for progress, Goldsboro and the Wayne County region will require stronger attention and more pointed focus from state government.
Because poverty is entrenched and multifaceted, it provides multiple entry points for intervention. A first priority should be to undertake any steps that can, even if modestly, ameliorate basic day-to-day hardships. School backpack programs, such as those successfully initiated in other communities, innovative food production and delivery systems such as mobile grocery services (essentially food trucks that deliver groceries), and other strategies, especially those centering on children, should be pressed and expanded. The lack of programs for teens, especially during the summer, was frequently lamented and could be re-launched.

We talked to people who desperately want to become financially self-sufficient but are hobbled in some way. A criminal record, a missing or revoked driver’s license, or the demands of child care can get in the way of steady employment. The city should consider ways to remove these and other barriers, either through its own actions or in partnership. Quality child care and pre-K in particular is a win-win as it provides long-term benefits for children while allowing parents to work.

Affordable, safe and appealing housing is a dramatic challenge in Goldsboro. Few think it acceptable that children and disadvantaged families should face such wrenching difficulties in securing the fundamental human necessity of housing. Exciting ideas and selfless actors now appear in both the government and non-government sectors. Sustained efforts, drawing on successes seen in other North Carolina communities, are demanded. For low income residents of Goldsboro and Wayne County, no problem surpasses the demand for safe and affordable housing.

Homelessness and the intersection between mental health, substance abuse and homelessness were not a focus of our report, but a refrain we heard often. Housing first programs, which seek to house people who are chronically homeless before attempting to address their other needs, have been successfully implemented throughout the country. Program evaluations indicate that housing chronically homeless individuals leads to cost savings through reduced spending on emergency services and incarceration. Other efforts, such as issuing forgivable loans for housing renovations and repairs, weatherizing or retrofitting older homes, pursuing a penny tax for affordable housing, assisting first-time homebuyers, or bringing the housing code to bear against unscrupulous landlords can attack the housing conundrum from different directions. Some of these initiatives may already be happening. If that’s the case, evaluate whether they can be expanded or redirected if need be.

The Goldsboro community is frequently riven, and separated, particularly by race. Individuals we interviewed spoke of the “disconnect between ‘our community’ and ‘those people,’” or distinctions based on city versus county residence. These polarizations play out in direct and focused ways on many issues associated with poverty and concentrated hardship. Expanded efforts to reach across such divides are essential—especially in dealing with racialized concentrated poverty, extreme school segregation, criminal justice and post-incarceration reentry reform, disparate opportunities in employment and higher education, literacy, immigration, wealth, social services and economic development. Racial polarization, and other sources of division, must be addressed openly and honestly—even when, as the entire nation knows, the conversations are beyond difficult.

There is no magic bullet that will solve poverty in Goldsboro. While poverty is not intractable, the fight against requires patience, and political and civic will. It is also crucial, in dealing with the challenges of poverty, to seek out the voices of poor people. Mistrust is potent and often the result of past failures. The impoverished may not flock to the councils of government. But the people with the most trenchant insights into poverty in Goldsboro are the poor in Goldsboro. To understand how best to tackle poverty, listen to them. Sometimes the simplest and easiest solutions are the ones that people with comfortable lives are oblivious to. Goldsboro is blessed with community, religious and volunteer leaders who might help to establish more successful bridges of communication. But the poor in Goldsboro cannot remain invisible to the broader society.
Appendix One

Average monthly earnings by sector and race/ethnicity, third quarter 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Employment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
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<td>$1,878</td>
<td>$8,727</td>
<td>$3,056</td>
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<td>Retail Trade</td>
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<td>$1,871</td>
<td>$2,320</td>
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<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>$4,410</td>
<td>$3,282</td>
<td>$4,414</td>
<td>$3,024</td>
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<td>Educational Services</td>
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<td>$2,273</td>
<td>$3,207</td>
<td>$2,666</td>
<td>4,016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>$1,498</td>
<td>$1,187</td>
<td>$1,574</td>
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<td>Wholesale Trade</td>
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<td>$3,125</td>
<td>$5,500</td>
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<td>Construction</td>
<td>$3,903</td>
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<td>Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting</td>
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<td>$2,325</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</td>
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<td>Administrative/Waste Management and Remediation Services</td>
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<td>$1,524</td>
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<td>Finance and Insurance</td>
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<td>Transportation and Warehousing</td>
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<td>Management</td>
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<td>Real Estate and Rental and Leasing</td>
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<td>$5,787</td>
<td>$4,596</td>
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</table>

Source: QWI Explorer
## Appendix Two

### Percent of employment with median annual wage below the Living Income Standard by occupational group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Group</th>
<th>Employment w/ median annual wage &lt; LIS</th>
<th>Total employment</th>
<th>Percent of employment w/ median annual wage &lt; LIS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management Occupations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,120</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and Financial Operations Occupications</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,240</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer and Mathematical Occupications</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture and Engineering Occupications</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Protective Service Occupications</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupications</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>2,870</td>
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<tr>
<td>Production Occupications</td>
<td>720</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupications</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>Education, Training, and Library Occupications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupications</td>
<td>390</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2960</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupications</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

References


More Information

Gene Nichol is Boyd Tinsley Distinguished Professor of Law at the University of North Carolina School of Law. Heather Hunt is a Research Associate at Carolina Law. The research and publication work of Nichol, Hunt and their colleagues is supported by the North Carolina Poverty Research Fund of the University of North Carolina School of Law.

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