Poverty Elimination Action Plan

Submitted by the City of Omaha

Prepared by the University of Nebraska Omaha & the City of Omaha
5/14/2025

Spohn, R., Towne, K., & Sariscsany, L. (2025, May 15). Poverty elimination action plan. Prepared by the University of Nebraska Omaha & the City of Omaha. Submitted by the City of Omaha.

Design/Report Layout by Dana Osborne Design

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Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere gratitude to Senator Terrell McKinney for championing LB 840 on behalf of Nebraska's citizens and for participating in a community engagement event to share your vision and goals for this impactful legislation.

Our thanks also go to the City of Omaha for entrusting us with this vital project and providing unwavering support throughout its development. In particular, we greatly appreciate Cailin Daly Dejillas and Christian Espinosa Torres for fostering open communication and sharing innovative ideas that significantly enriched this report.

We would also like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the University of Nebraska Omaha graduate students who volunteered to assist the evaluation team during the community engagement events: Sadie Brewer, Champ Champenstein, Taylor Gonzales, Faith Hill, Macy Person, Maddie Quinonez, Hannah Rethmeier, Cely Juan Sebastian, Paige Wergin, and Valeria Torres-Rivera who continued working with these data by transcribing responses from community members.

Special recognition is due to graduate assistant Emily Linehan, who joined the NCJR evaluation team in late Fall 2024 and made significant contributions by retrieving data, creating tables, organizing information, and proofreading previous versions of this work.

We also extend our gratitude to the incredible organizations dedicated to poverty elimination who made time to contribute to this project. Your participation in the Poverty Elimination Action Plan Organization Survey and/or the additional details you shared during our meetings provided invaluable insights into your efforts and challenges.

Finally, we extend our deepest appreciation to the community members who attended engagement events, participated in meetings, and responded to survey requests, sharing their invaluable perspectives on poverty in our community. Your participation reflects a profound hope for a brighter future, one that is especially meaningful considering the growing wealth gap and declining quality of life in our nation.

This project stands as one of the most impactful initiatives we have had the privilege of working on. We hope that as you read this report, you not only gain valuable insights into poverty and its challenges but also feel inspired to take action, no matter how small, to help reduce poverty in our communities. Your engagement and commitment can contribute to building a more equitable and abundant future for all.

Executive Summary

This document fulfills the legislative requirements of LB 840, the Poverty Elimination Action Plan, aimed at reporting on Omaha efforts to eliminate poverty and developing a comprehensive strategy to eliminate poverty in Omaha, NE. It reviews research and policy interventions addressing poverty, incorporates community-driven and secondary data for a needs assessment, and offers actionable recommendations for poverty alleviation. The report also provides guidance on implementation, sustainability, and progress tracking. A brief conclusion at the end of this report is followed by appendices detailing supplementary data and analysis.

Key Findings

- Most Americans will be in poverty at some point in their adult lives (Rank, Hirschl, & Foster, 2021).

- The U.S. labor market's shift from manufacturing to low-wage, service-sector jobs contributes significantly to poverty rates (Autor, 2010).

- Omaha's poverty rate has declined since 2012, aligning with other large Midwest cities. Using the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM), Omaha's rate is slightly lower than the national average.

- The poverty rate for Black households in Omaha is 32.6%, nearly 12 percentage points higher than the national average. Hispanic or Latino households and households of two or more races hover around 16%. Meanwhile, White households experience a lower rate at 9.3%, close to the national average.

- Nebraska's Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program is underutilized, with 90% of applications denied, leading to $126 million in unspent federal funds (Hammel, 2023).

- Education and Job Training: Omaha's high school graduation rates surpass national averages, but community members call for expanded trade schools, financial support for training, and improved education quality in underserved areas.

- Economic Development and Employment: Unemployment rates vary across age, racial, and ethnic groups, with younger workers and several communities of color (e.g., Black, Pacific Islander, and multiracial individuals) experiencing higher unemployment, highlighting the need for targeted job access policies.

- Health Care Access: 9.7% of Omaha residents are uninsured, higher than the national average (8.6%), with a notable percentage from lower-income groups.

- Housing: Homeownership costs in Omaha surpass the national median of $1,331, whereas rental costs are lower than the U.S. median of $1,348 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2024).

- Transportation and Infrastructure: According to the U.S. Census (2023), public transit usage in Omaha is low (1.1%) relative to the national average, making expanded routes and frequencies essential to ensure job access, particularly in employment hubs like west Omaha.

Proposed Solutions

Centering community feedback, leaning into peer-reviewed research and evidence-based practices, our evaluation team identified several recommendations to address each of the key components of poverty. While it would be ideal to implement all strategies and recommendations swiftly, a phased approach focusing on the most urgent needs may be more effective. The needs assessment reveals that while local organizations and the City of Omaha prioritize housing, employment, and health, there are still unmet needs, particularly in *housing, education, transportation*, and *other areas*. Community feedback emphasizes these as critical areas of concern, and a closer look at priorities shows that housing and other areas are the most urgent issues to address first. Specific policies and practices are outlined below:

1. Housing recommendations include increasing housing subsidies for the homeless, improving tenant legal protections, using TIF to create affordable housing in coordination with transportation and employment efforts, supporting a Omaha Municipal Land Bank (OMLB), exploring use of land trusts, promoting accessory dwelling units, encouraging private investment through Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, expanding supportive housing units, and rehabilitating existing affordable housing to maintain inventory and reduce costs.

2. Additional community recommendations include implementing a guaranteed income initiative, expanding paid leave for low-income workers, supporting workers with a local Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and subsidizing childcare.

3. Education and job training recommendations include expanding early childhood program access toward universal pre-kindergarten, increasing support for Omaha Public Schools, facilitating partnerships with private organizations and education institutions, supporting financial assistance programs for higher education, and considering tax credits for businesses providing adult learning and training opportunities.

4. Transportation and infrastructure recommendations include supporting the microtransit pilot to make it permanent, increasing state support for public transit, aligning new development with public transportation, improving ORBT and expanding routes, promoting free transit for K-12 and higher education students, and gathering community feedback on new transit opportunities.

5. Economic development and employment recommendations include expanding childcare assistance; supporting a minimum wage increase, small business support programs, and inclusive hiring initiatives; consider comprehensive economic strategies and public-private partnerships with inclusive policies; and adopt transit-oriented development.

6. Health care access recommendations include supporting and expanding community health organizations to provide affordable care and mental health services and establish a medical funding and liaison program to assist individuals with medical expenses, provide financial support for caregivers, and help residents connect with existing community resources.

Implementation and Sustainability

We provide a detailed implementation matrix with actionable steps to execute each recommendation and a comprehensive sustainability plan to guide efforts towards the long-term sustainability of Omaha's Poverty Elimination Action Plan (PEAP) by integrating initiatives into ongoing systems. A focus on diversified funding, community involvement, monitoring, and adaptability will help address evolving needs. By implementing a multi-faceted strategy that incorporates diversified funding, stakeholder engagement, data-driven decision-making, and policy advocacy, Omaha can sustain its poverty reduction efforts over time and create a framework that addresses both current and future challenges.

Opening Assumptions and Premises

Poverty is an exceptionally complex issue, both in how it impacts individuals and communities, as well as the complex variety of factors impacting how poverty varies with time and based on location. We begin this report with several assumptions and premises about poverty in the City of Omaha and the Poverty Elimination Action Plan developed in this report.

First, poverty's personal impact is pervasive, touching nearly every aspect of an individual's life and potentially creating long-lasting consequences, especially for youth. Our community engagement efforts resulted in poignant testimonials that underscore this reality. Critically, we must recognize that moving a family above the official poverty line does not automatically resolve the deep-seated, systemic challenges associated with economic hardship and its intergenerational effects.

Second, our research revealed extensive, multi-sector efforts to address poverty in the Omaha Metro, yet a critical paradox emerged: despite widespread interventions, poverty indicators are worsening. Current data suggests a 12.5% poverty rate, with declining affordable housing and increasing homelessness. Echoing Williams Edwards Deming's insight that "Every system is perfectly designed to get the result that it does," Omaha's existing ecosystem—encompassing local and state governments, non-profits, citizens, and businesses—is inadvertently sustaining this poverty rate. *The key conclusion is stark: maintaining the status quo or incrementally expanding current approaches will not eliminate poverty. Omaha requires bold, innovative policy strategies to confront this persistently complex social challenge.*

Third, U.S. social policy historically lacks a comprehensive safety net to protect citizens from economic volatility and poverty. Unlike the Nordic Model's universal social protections—which include guaranteed healthcare, robust unemployment benefits, and comprehensive pension systems funded by higher taxation—the American approach is fundamentally different (Anderson et al., 2007). The U.S. has only made significant expansions to our safety net twice, bringing us temporarily closer to the more comprehensive welfare state offered in Nordic countries: during the Great Depression's New Deal and briefly during COVID-19 pandemic relief. Generally, the American model prioritizes lower taxes and individual responsibility over systemic protection, resulting in a fragmented welfare state with significant gaps in healthcare, childcare, and income support (Hacker & Pierson, 2016).

Our purpose is not to debate the merits of these contrasting models, but to point out the complexities of addressing poverty in the U.S. system. While poverty alleviation emerges from multiple sources, individual initiative, private markets, charitable efforts, and multilevel policy interventions—most poverty-influencing factors transcend city-level control. Consequently, Omaha's strategy must focus on four key actions (the 4 "Cs"): COLLABORATE, COORDINATE, COMMUNICATE, and ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY. Just as the efforts to create this report incorporated extensive collaboration, coordination, communication, and community engagement, the majority of the recommendations for addressing poverty in Omaha communities will require similar actions. Throughout, all major efforts should include community members, philanthropists, the business community, the public school system and county and state government. This approach aligns with LB 840's directive of fostering coordination among government agencies, nonprofits, and businesses. We recommend the City regularly convene these stakeholders (e.g., quarterly, semi-annually, or annually) to implement the Poverty Elimination Action Plan.

Fourth, poverty is dynamic, continually shifting in scale and complexity...as are poverty alleviation efforts. In fact, over the course of our research, a number of new trends in poverty in Omaha have been announced, as well as significant new efforts to address poverty. To effectively address this fluid landscape, consistent and frequent engagement with community stakeholders is essential for tracking changes and implementing responsive poverty-alleviation efforts.

Fifth, a very large number of individuals and organizations both participated in our research and are conducting extremely valuable, and largely thankless, work to address the needs of Omaha citizens facing poverty and hardship. This includes community members who attended our engagement events, City of Omaha employees, staff and leadership of non-profits, community leaders who took time to meet with us personally, Senator McKinney

(LB 840's sponsor), and numerous individuals who will not receive the recognition they deserve. This report, due to space and time constraints, does not do justice to their efforts.

Seventh, while LB 840 specifies targeted geographic areas for poverty elimination, our data gathering and community engagement frequently transcended these boundaries. We were unable to limit our research strictly to the economic redevelopment areas, high-poverty zones, and qualified census tracts outlined in the bill, recognizing the interconnected nature of poverty across Omaha.

Eighth, this report represents our research team's attempt to address Omaha's poverty elimination mission as outlined in LB 840. Recognizing the problem's complexity, we do not claim to provide a comprehensive solution. Instead, this document synthesizes diverse research to offer policy recommendations across multiple domains impacted by poverty. Poverty elimination is an intractable challenge, influenced by countless social, political, and economic factors. If a definitive solution existed, it would have been implemented already. This report represents initial steps toward meaningful, good-faith policy changes across community sectors. Our research team is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this critical work. All errors and omissions are ours, and not the fault of the City of Omaha. We ask that all interested stakeholders build upon the work that we have begun.

Introduction to Poverty (LB 840 Section 5(1)(c))

Poverty is a persistent challenge in Omaha, Nebraska, affecting a significant portion of the population and imposing substantial economic, social, and health burdens on individuals and communities alike. In 2022, the poverty rate in Douglas County was 12.1% (US Census, 2022). However, this underestimates the portion of the population affected by poverty. In fact, most Americans will experience a spell of poverty at some point in their adulthood (Rank et al., 2021). This report presents a needs assessment to inform a strategic framework for eliminating poverty in Omaha. Understanding the root causes and systemic factors contributing to poverty is essential for crafting policies that not only alleviate its symptoms but address its origins. This report seeks to provide policymakers with the insights needed to adopt transformative, evidence-based policies that move beyond short-term solutions to address poverty's complex and interwoven determinants.

Research increasingly suggests that poverty is not merely a result of individual shortcomings but is profoundly shaped by policy decisions at federal, state, and local levels. Scholars argue that poverty is, in many ways, a policy choice—a phenomenon influenced by choices around social safety nets, housing, wages, healthcare, and education (Brady, 2019; Desmond & Western, 2018). For example, pandemic-era social insurance programs—like Social Security, economic stimulus checks, a strengthened unemployment insurance (UI) system, and the expanded Child Tax Credit—kept 25 million people out of poverty in 2021, illustrating the powerful role of policy interventions in poverty alleviation (Economic Policy Institute, 2021).

The needs assessment in this report examines the landscape of Omaha to identify barriers to poverty alleviation and the specific needs of vulnerable populations. Key areas of focus include housing, education, healthcare, employment, access to capital, economic development, social services, and transportation. By analyzing local data and seeking input from Omaha residents, we aim to pinpoint gaps in the current policy landscape and identify opportunities for reform. This assessment will use an evidence-based approach, informed by peer-reviewed research, to support the argument that Omaha can reduce poverty significantly through targeted policy interventions.

Ultimately, this report emphasizes that poverty elimination is feasible with the right mix of political will, resources, and strategic, data-driven policies. Addressing poverty is not merely a matter of resource allocation but a choice to prioritize the welfare and dignity of all Omaha residents. By implementing policies designed to reduce economic inequality, enhance social safety nets, and ensure access to essential services, policymakers in Omaha can work toward a future in which poverty is no longer a defining feature of the community.

Measuring Poverty (LB 840 Section 5(1)(c))

Understanding poverty levels requires a clear and consistent method of measurement. Poverty is a measure of deprivation, used to determine whether a household has enough income to meet its basic needs (Meyer & Sullivan, 2012). What constitutes basic needs differs by country and is determined based on societal norms. In the United States, the Official Poverty Measure (OPM) identifies families labeled as poor using a threshold that takes the average cost of groceries in the mid-1960s, adjusts it by household size, and multiplies it by three (to account for other family expenses) (Institute for Research on Poverty, 2024). This threshold is adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). If a household's pre-tax income, not including capital gains and noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps), is below this threshold, the household is considered poor (Institute for Research on Poverty, 2024).

Despite the role of the OPM, it has notable limitations. The OPM does not capture tax credits, work expenses, child-care expenses, medical expenses, or geographic variations in cost of living, despite vastly different costs of living throughout the country (Short, 2011). These limitations necessitate an alternative approach to measuring poverty more accurately.

To address these limitations, the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) was developed. In comparison to the OPM, the SPM measures poverty using cash income, plus noncash benefits, minus taxes (or plus tax credits), work expenses, medical expenses, and child support paid to another household (Fox, Garfinkel, Kaushal, & Waldfogel, 2015; Renwick & Fox, 2016). Thresholds are adjusted based on geographic location. Despite the improvements in the SPM, the OPM continues to play a vital role in our society as it is used to determine eligibility for several public programs (Renwick & Fox, 2016). As a result, this report will discuss both measures of poverty to provide a comprehensive understanding.

Determinants of Poverty (LB 840 Section 5(1)(c))

While measurements like the OPM and SPM indicate the prevalence of poverty, understanding its determinants is essential for tackling its root causes. Poverty in the United States is shaped by a complex set of factors, including education, employment dynamics, healthcare access, and systemic inequality. Educational disparities are a primary driver, as individuals with lower levels of education are often limited to lower-paying jobs and are at greater risk of unemployment (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). Regions with lower educational attainment tend to have persistently higher poverty rates, reflecting a strong link between educational access and economic stability (Chetty, Hendren, Kline, & Saez, 2014).

Economic factors also contribute significantly to poverty levels. Labor market conditions further influence poverty in the U.S. Shifts in the economy, including the decline of manufacturing jobs and the rise of service-sector employment, have led to a prevalence of low-wage jobs that often lack benefits and long-term security (Autor, 2010). These trends disproportionately impact low-income individuals, contributing to persistent poverty, especially in rural and post-industrial regions (Kalleberg, 2011). Additionally, barriers such as limited transportation and childcare access hinder economic mobility for many workers, particularly single parents and those in underserved areas (Edin & Shaefer, 2015).

Healthcare expenses further exacerbate financial instability for many Americans. Healthcare is another determinant, as many Americans face high medical costs and limited access to affordable insurance, particularly in low-income communities. Research indicates that health-related financial burdens can plunge individuals into poverty or deepen existing poverty, especially in the absence of universal healthcare (Himmelstein et al., 2009; Shaefer et al., 2022).

Finally, poverty is compounded by systemic inequalities that create persistent barriers to opportunity. Systemic inequality, including racial and gender disparities, contributes to poverty by limiting access to opportunities and resources. Structural barriers—such as discriminatory hiring practices, housing segregation, and unequal schooling—disproportionately affect Black, Hispanic, and Native American communities, entrenching poverty across generations (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006; Shapiro, Meschede, & Osoro, 2013). Addressing poverty in the U.S. requires policies that target these multifaceted, intersecting determinants.

Poverty in Omaha (LB 840 Section 5(1)(c))

Turning to Omaha specifically, we explore recent trends in poverty. Figure 1 illustrates the annual OPM poverty rate in Omaha from 2012 to 2023 and compares it to the rates in Kansas City and Des Moines (US Census, 2023). Notably, data for 2020 is excluded due to pandemic-related limitations.

In Omaha, the OPM poverty rate declined significantly, from 18.1% in 2012 to 11.6% in 2019. Throughout this period, Omaha consistently maintained a lower poverty rate compared to Kansas City and Des Moines, except for a brief instance in 2015. Furthermore, the disparity between Omaha's poverty rate and those of the other cities widened over this time. In 2012, Omaha's poverty rate was approximately one to two percentage points lower than Des Moines and Kansas City, but by 2019, this gap had expanded to nearly four percentage points.

In 2021, the trend shifted. Poverty in Omaha increased, while it decreased in Kansas City and Des Moines, effectively erasing the pre-pandemic gap. Between 2021 and 2023, Omaha's poverty rate stabilized at around 13%. By 2023, Des Moines once again had a higher poverty rate than Omaha, while Kansas City's poverty rate was slightly lower than Omaha's.
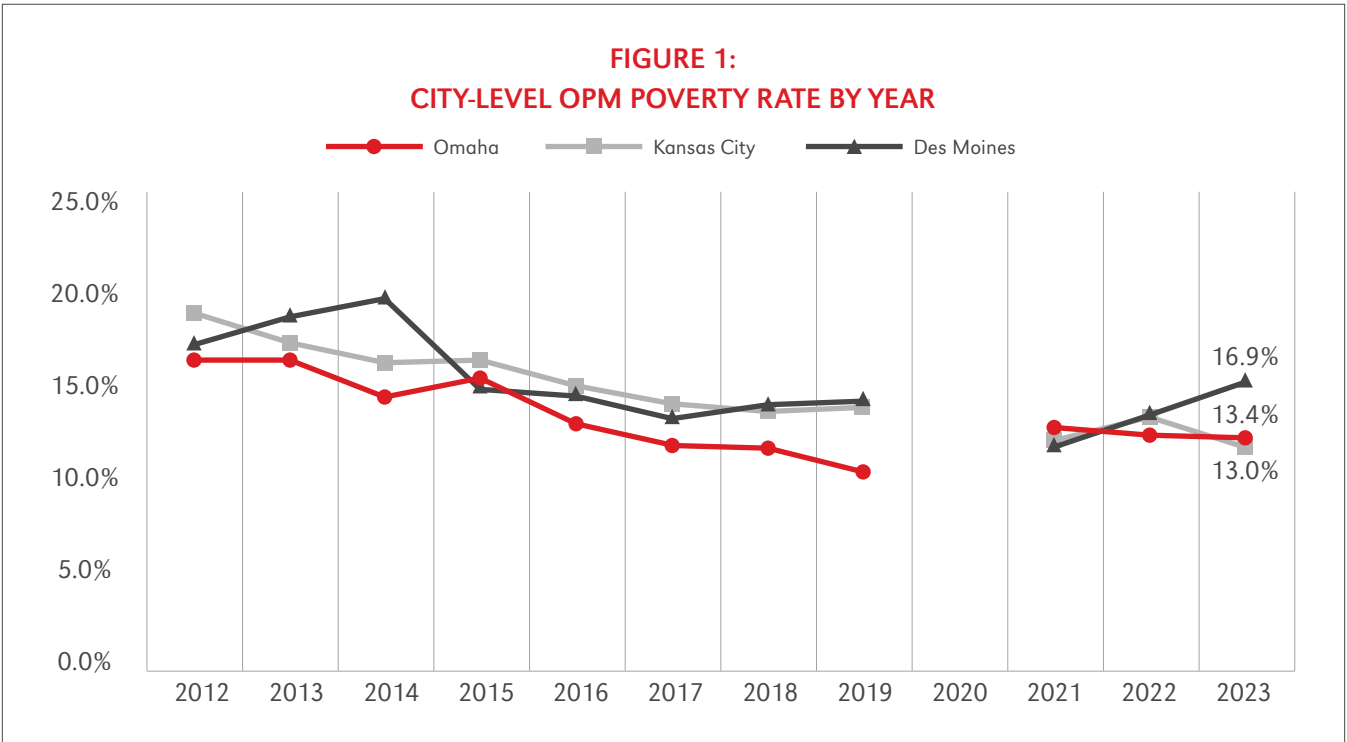
FIGURE 1:
CITY-LEVEL OPM POVERTY RATE BY YEAR

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months. American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1701.

The trends in OPM poverty provide valuable insights; however, as previously noted, the OPM has inherent limitations. To address these, Figure 2 presents an analysis of poverty using the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM). Unlike the OPM, SPM poverty rates are not readily available at the city level. Therefore, Figure 2 examines SPM poverty for the Omaha Metropolitan Area, the closest comparable measure, alongside national SPM poverty rates for context.

Figure 2 reveals that, according to the SPM, Omaha's poverty rate was significantly lower than the national average in 2012. Like the OPM, SPM poverty declined between 2012 and 2019, but the decrease was more modest. This discrepancy likely reflects additional costs, such as childcare, that are incorporated into the SPM but excluded from the OPM.

In 2021, SPM poverty trends diverged sharply from those observed in Figure 1. Nationally and in Omaha, SPM poverty dropped dramatically due to pandemic-related financial assistance, particularly the expanded Child Tax Credit, which has since expired. This reduction is uniquely captured by the SPM, as it accounts for tax credits and non-cash income—factors excluded from the OPM.

However, in 2022 and 2023, Omaha experienced significant increases in SPM poverty. While the 2022 rise mirrors national trends, the 2023 increase in Omaha was notably larger than the national average. Consequently, Omaha's 2023 SPM poverty rate reached its highest level in a decade. Although still below the national average, the gap between Omaha and the national rate has narrowed considerably, shrinking by half compared to 2012.

FIGURE 2:
METROPOLITAN AREA SPM POVERTY RATE BY YEAR
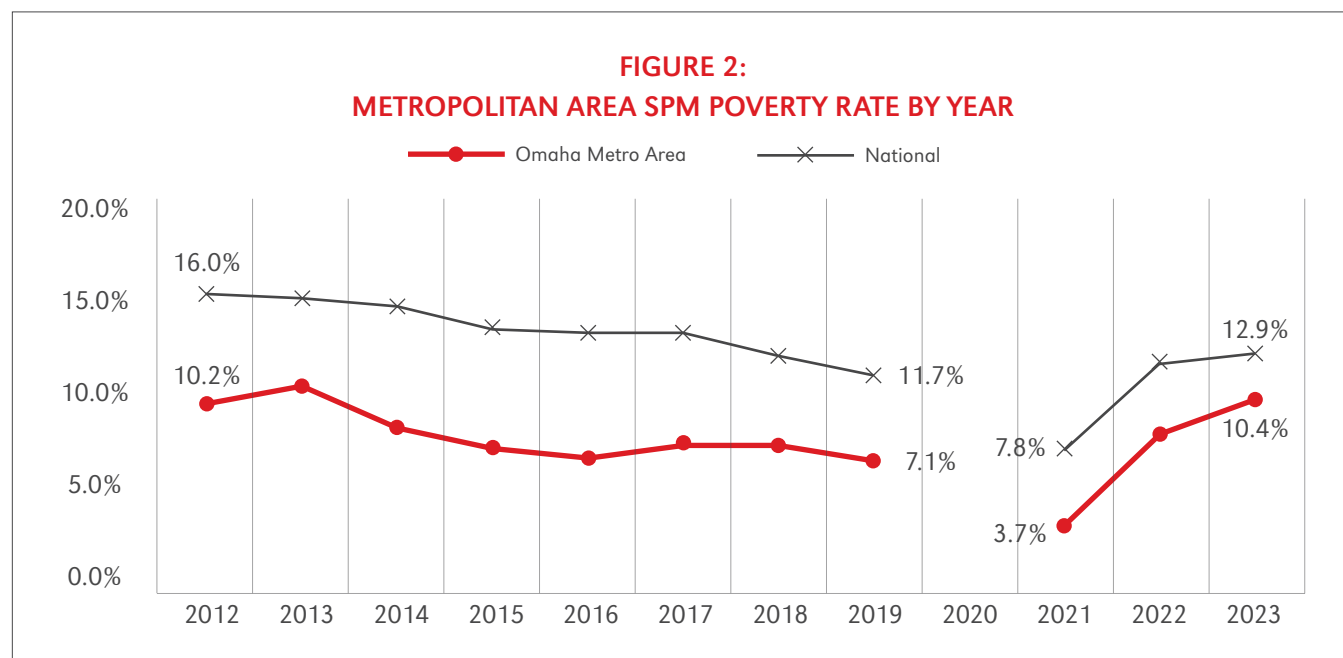
Source: IPUMS CPS, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.
Note: Poverty rates were calculated based on the population as of March of the following year, consistent with the methodology used by the U.S. Census Bureau

To develop a nuanced understanding of poverty in Omaha, it is essential to examine how poverty varies across demographic subgroups. Racial disparities in Omaha highlight stark contrasts in poverty rates, as illustrated in Figure 3. Among these, the Black community experiences the highest poverty rate at an alarming 32.6%, nearly 12 percentage points above the national average for Black individuals. Comparing Omaha to similar cities, we see poverty among Black residents is lower in Kansas City as compared to Omaha but higher in Des Moines. In contrast, White households in Nebraska report the lowest poverty rate by race at 9.3%, closely aligning with the national average.

Asian and multiracial individuals in Omaha also face slightly higher poverty rates compared to their respective national averages. Similarly, Hispanic or Latino individuals in Omaha experience significantly higher poverty rates than White individuals, though their rates are largely consistent with national trends.

A deeper examination of poverty by race reveals pronounced racial inequities. Nationally, People of Color are disproportionately affected by poverty compared to White individuals. In Omaha and Des Moines, this disparity is even more pronounced, with approximately one in three Black Omaha residents living in poverty, and nearly half of Black Des Moines residents. This makes Black individuals in Omaha 3.5 times more likely to experience poverty than their White counterparts, underscoring the severe racial inequities in the city.
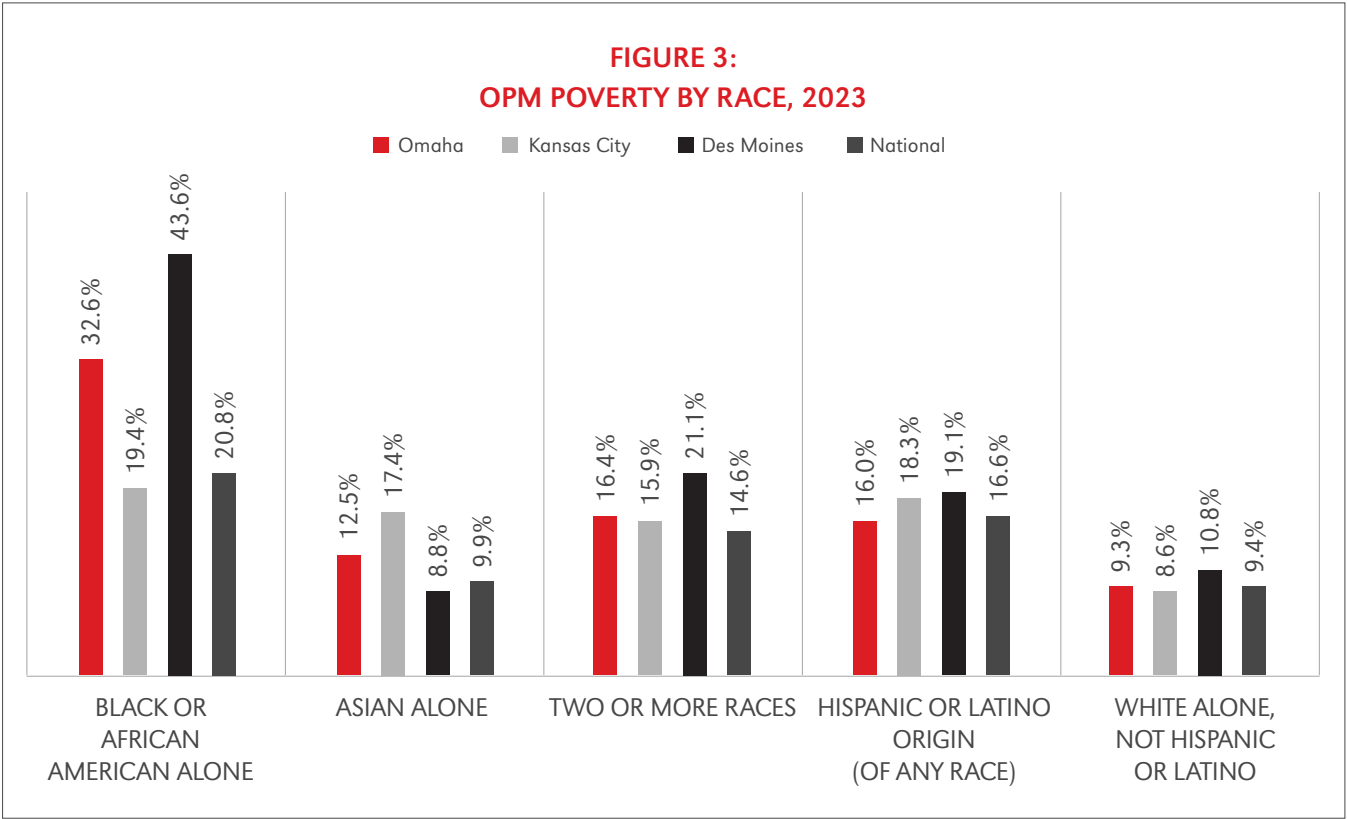
FIGURE 3:
OPM POVERTY BY RACE, 2023

Legend: Omaha | Kansas City | Des Moines | National

| Race/Ethnicity	Omaha	Kansas City	Des Moines	National
BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN ALONE	32.6%	19.4%	43.6%	20.8%
ASIAN ALONE	12.5%	17.4%	8.8%	9.9%
TWO OR MORE RACES	16.4%	15.9%	21.1%	14.6%
HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN (OF ANY RACE)	16.0%	18.3%	19.1%	16.6%
WHITE ALONE, NOT HISPANIC OR LATINO	9.3%	8.6%	10.8%	9.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months. American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1701.

Educational attainment plays a critical role in shaping economic stability and significantly influences poverty rates. Poverty rates vary notably by education level, as depicted in Figure 4. Consistent with comparison groups, poverty in Omaha declines as educational attainment increases. However, Omaha stands out with slightly lower poverty rates among individuals who have completed at least some college. For those with a bachelor's degree or higher, poverty in Omaha is exceptionally low, at only 1.6%. In contrast, individuals with only a high school diploma (or equivalent) are more likely to live in poverty in Omaha than their national and Kansas City counterparts.

These findings underscore the critical role of educational access and attainment in mitigating poverty and highlight the importance of continued efforts to expand educational opportunities to promote economic stability.

FIGURE 4:
OPM POVERTY BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, 2023

■ Omaha ■ Kansas City ■ Des Moines ■ National

Education Level	Omaha	Kansas City	Des Moines	National
LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE	23.9%	17.4%	28.0%	24.3%
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE (OR EQUIVALENT)	18.9%	13.9%	18.9%	14.6%
SOME COLLEGE (ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE)	6.0%	13.0%	11.1%	10.0%
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER	1.6%	3.1%	2.2%	4.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months. American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1701.

City of Omaha: Economic Redevelopment Areas and Distribution of Poverty
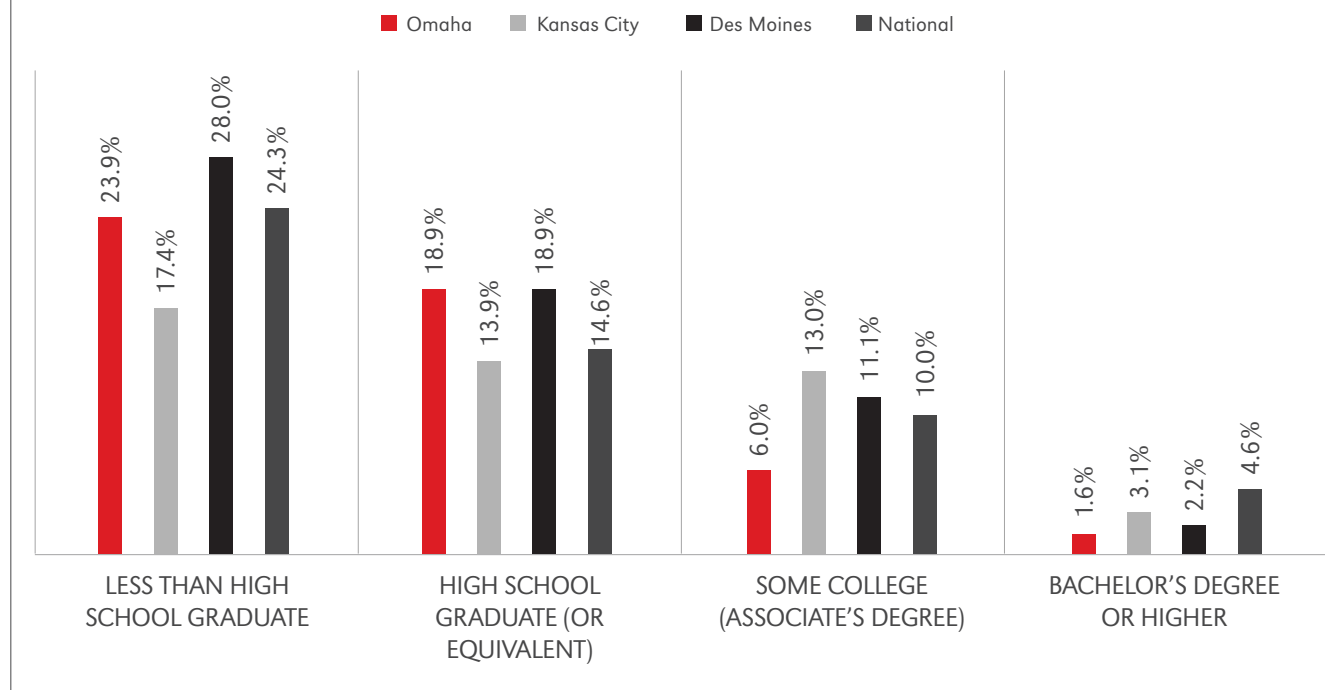
LB 840, passed by the Nebraska Legislature in the 2024 session, indicates that one emphasis of Omaha's five-year poverty elimination action plan must be a focus on the goals for poverty elimination in three specific geographic areas: a) economic redevelopment areas, b) high-poverty areas, and c) qualified census tracks. The bill defines economic redevelopment areas as areas in Omaha in which "The average rate of unemployment in the area during the period covered by the most recent federal decennial census or American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate by the United States Bureau of the Census is at least one hundred fifty percent of the average rate of unemployment in the state during the same period; and the average poverty rate in the area is twenty percent or more for the federal census tract in the area." These census tracts are indicated with squares in Figure 5.

The bill defines high poverty areas as "consisting of one or more contiguous census tracts, as determined by the most recent federal decennial census, which contain a percentage of persons with incomes below the poverty line of greater than thirty percent, and all census tracts contiguous to such tract or tracts, as determined by the most recent federal decennial census." These census tracts are indicated with circles in Figure 5.

Finally, LB 840 defines qualified census tracks as a "qualified census tract as defined in 26 U.S.C. 42(d)(5)(B)(ii) (I), as such section existed on January 1, 2024." The corresponding text from this federal legislation[1] is: "The term "qualified census tract" means any census tract which is designated by the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and, for the most recent year for which census data are available on household income in such tract, either in which 50 percent or more of the households have an income which is less than 60 percent of the area

1. https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:26%20section:42%20edition:prelim)

median gross income for such year or which has a poverty rate of at least 25 percent. If the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development determines that sufficient data for any period are not available to apply this clause on the basis of census tracts, such Secretary shall apply this clause for such period on the basis of enumeration districts." These census tracts are indicated with circles in Figure 5. Note that each census tract might meet more than one of these three criteria.

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2018-2022 5-year estimates suggests an average poverty rate in Omaha of 13.5%. However, there is significant geographical variation in concentrations of poverty across the city (see Figure 6). Individual tracts in northeast Omaha are reported to experience poverty rates over 53%, whereas tracts in western regions of Omaha are reported to have poverty rates of 2-3% or less. In order to get the most benefit from scarce resources, and in the spirit of LB 840, most of this report will focus on poverty elimination solutions targeting areas of the metro experiencing higher rates of concentrated poverty.

FIGURE 5:
OMAHA ECONOMIC REDEVELOPMENT AREAS TARGETED BY LB 840
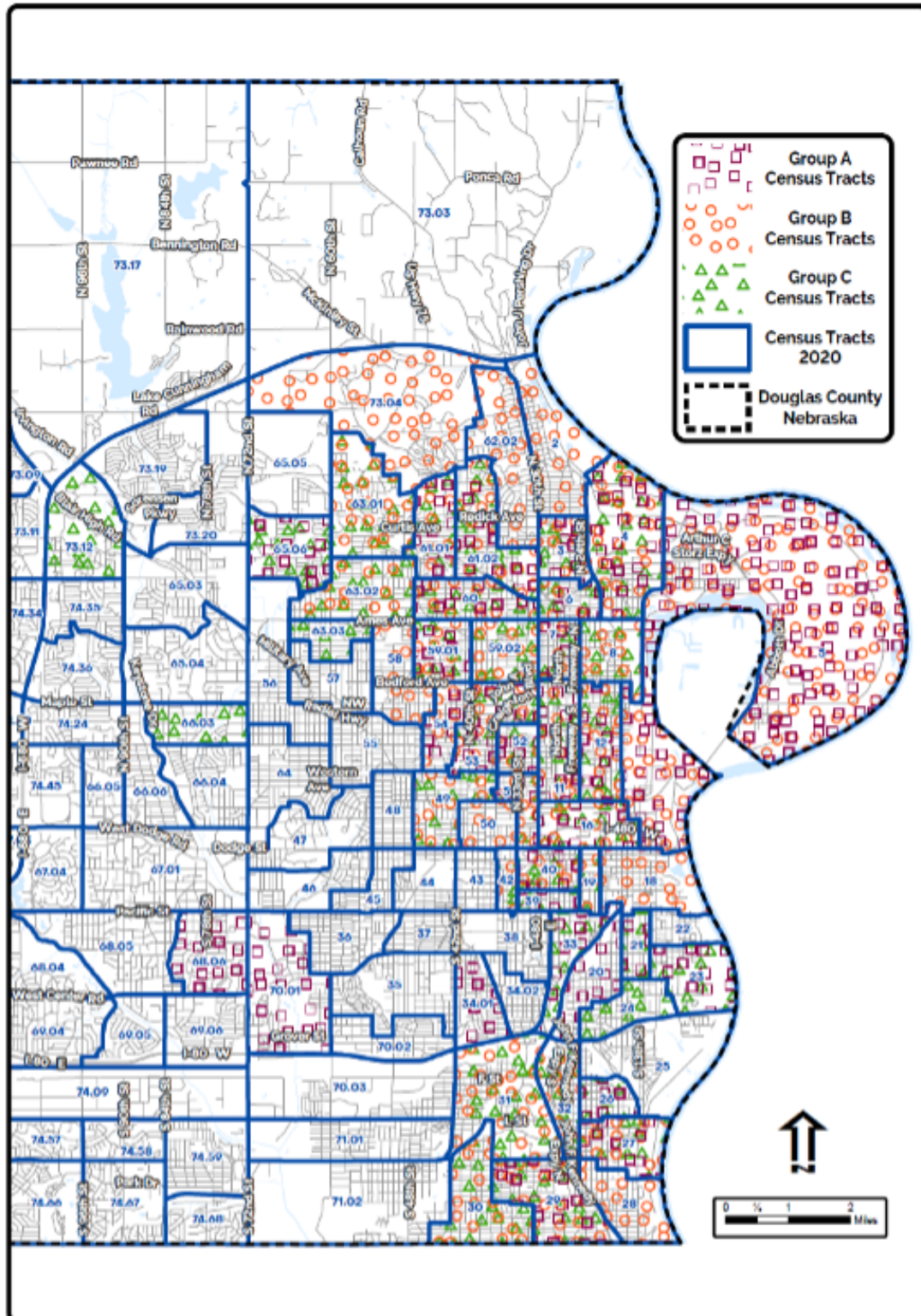
People Experiencing Poverty

Concentration

More than 30%

20% - 30%

10% - 20%

Less Than 10%
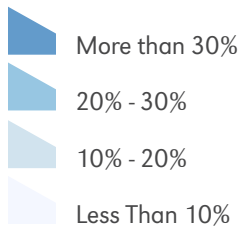
Note: Poverty status is determined by thresholds set by the U.S. Census Bureau based on income, family status, and family size. This data was sourced from the United States Census Bureau/American Community Survey's 2018 - 2022 5-Year Estimates, Table S1701 - Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months. The chart is produced by the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency's Regional Equity Toolbox: https://mapa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=379bec74369d4474bcb3b8fbd267f712
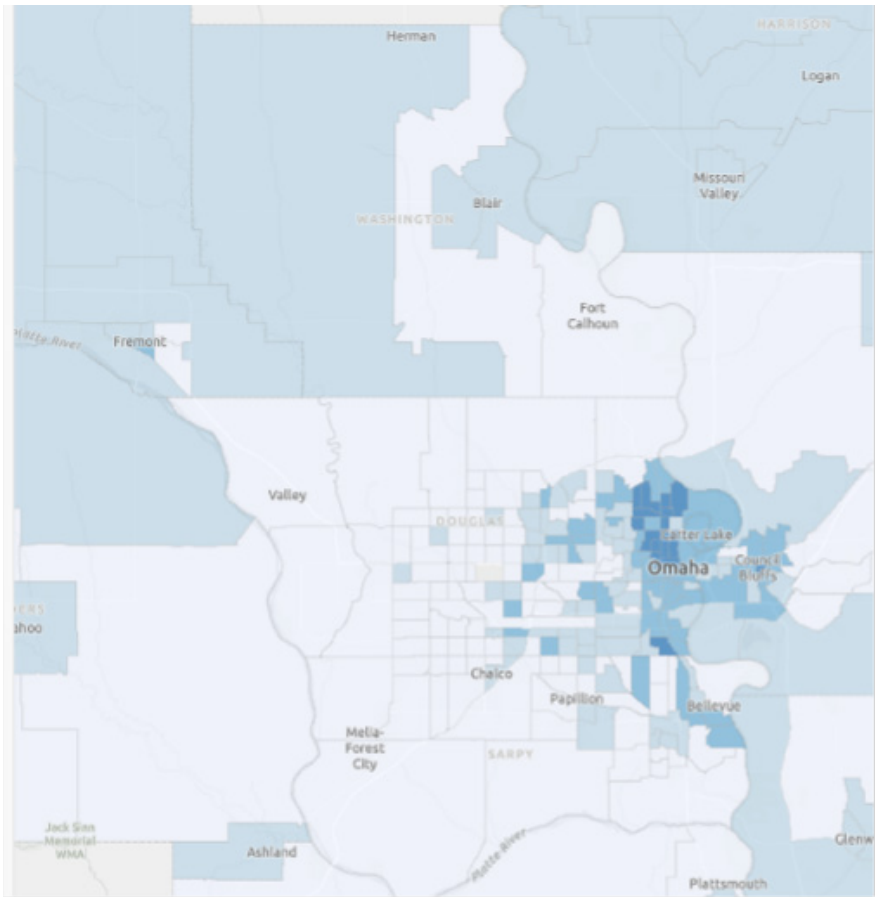
Another proxy measure that provides a glimpse of the geographical distribution of poverty in Omaha is the percentage of families who qualify for free/reduced lunches at public schools. Based on the National School Lunch Program, children from families with incomes at or below 130% of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those between 130% and 185% of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals.

This proxy poverty measure can be mapped by elementary school districts (the smallest neighborhoods), middle school districts (intermediate neighborhoods), and high school districts (the largest neighborhoods). Figure 7 maps OPS elementary school districts by percentage free/reduced lunch eligibility. Most of the eastern portion of Omaha is composed of districts with 80% or higher free/reduced lunch eligibility. Table 1 lists all elementary school districts exceeding 80% eligibility by zip code and percentages, beginning with the highest percentage (Sherman Elementary School, 95.18%).

Figure 8 provides similar information by middle school districts, indicating that all of eastern Omaha has middle school districts with at least 60% of students eligible for free/reduced lunches. Table 2 lists all middle school districts exceeding 80% eligibility by zip code and percentages, beginning with the highest percentage (Monroe Middle School, 91.78%). Finally, Figure 9 provides the same information by high school districts. This map also indicates that high school districts in the eastern portion of Omaha have at least a 60% eligibility rate, with southeastern districts having higher eligibility rates than northeastern districts. Table 3 lists free/reduced lunch eligibility for all high school districts over 80%, beginning with the highest percentage (Benson Magnet High School, 88.11%). This final map, however, also indicates high rates of eligibility for free/reduced lunches in high schools representing northwest Omaha.

FIGURE 7:
**MAP OF PERCENT FREE/REDUCED LUNCH PROGRAM PARTICIPATION
IN OPS ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS[2]**

Legend

<20%	20-40%	40-60%	60-80%	>80%	No Data

2. Source: https://www.zipdatamaps.com/schools/nebraska/district/map-of-omaha-public-schools-ne-elementary-school-free-lunch-program
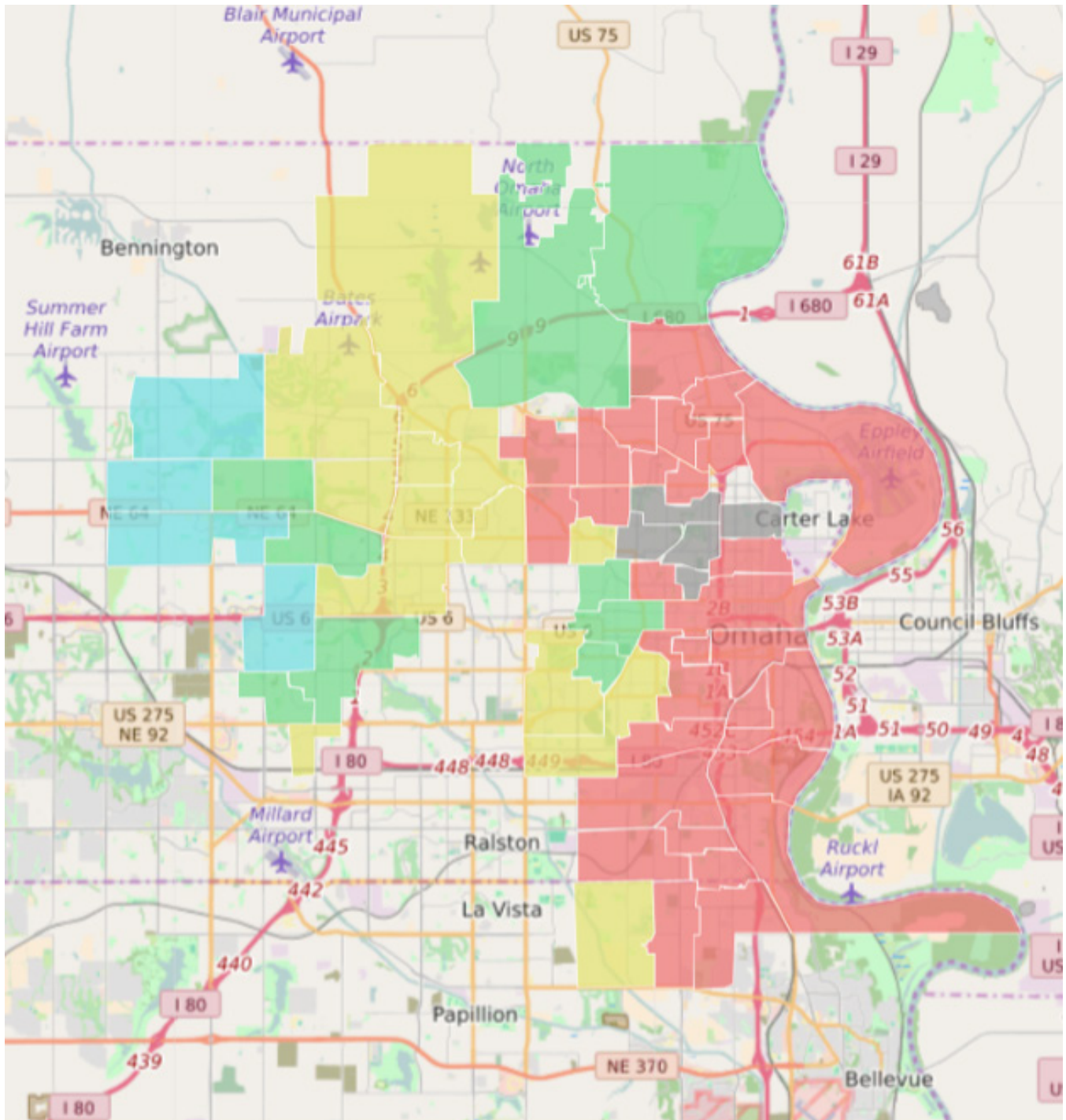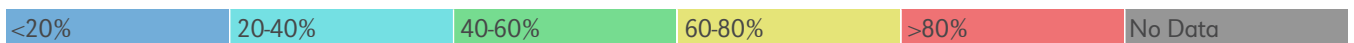
Table 1. Omaha Elementary Schools with More Than 80% Free/Reduced Lunch Program Participation		
School	Zip Code	Free/Reduced Lunch Program Participation
Sherman Elementary School	68110	95.18%
Central Park Elementary School	68111	94.31%
Conestoga Magnet Elementary School	68110	94.20%
Belvedere Elementary School	68111	94.07%
Indian Hill Elementary School	68107	93.37%
Kellom Elementary School	68102	93.13%
Highland Elementary School	68107	92.86%
Walnut Hill Elementary School	68131	92.77%
Miller Park Elementary School	68111	92.67%
Fontenelle Elementary School	68104	92.48%
Castelar Elementary School	68108	91.47%
Skinner Magnet Center	68111	91.08%
Minne Lusa Elementary School	68112	91.02%
Wakonda Elementary School	68104	90.58%
Hartman Elementary School	68104	90.11%
Liberty Elementary School	68102	89.44%
Bancroft Elementary School	68108	89.36%
Spring Lake Magnet Center	68107	88.89%
Mount View Elementary School	68104	88.69%
Gilder Elementary School	68147	88.22%
Gomez Heritage Elementary School	68107	87.45%
Ashland Park Robbins Elementary School	68117	85.65%
Gateway Elementary School	68107	85.49%
Benson West Elementary School	68104	85.04%
Jefferson Elementary School	68105	84.40%
Florence Elementary School	68111	84.39%
Field Club Elementary School	68105	83.72%
Chandler View Elementary School	68147	83.02%
Jackson Elementary School	68105	80.41%

FIGURE 8:
MAP OF PERCENT FREE/REDUCED LUNCH PROGRAM PARTICIPATION
IN OPS MIDDLE SCHOOLS[3]

Legend

<20%	20-40%	40-60%	60-80%	>80%	No Data

3. Source: https://www.zipdatamaps.com/schools/nebraska/district/map-of-omaha-public-schools-ne-middle-school-free-lunch-program

Table 2. Omaha Middle Schools with More Than 80% Free/Reduced Lunch Program Participation		
School	Zip Code	Free/Reduced Lunch Program Participation
Monroe Middle School	68104	91.78%
Marrs Middle School	68107	91.28%
Norris Middle School	68106	90.88%
Nathan Hale Magnet Middle School	68152	90.15%
Bryan Middle School	68147	88.40%
McMillan Magnet Middle School	68112	87.25%
King Science/Tech Magnet Middle School	68110	85.90%

FIGURE 9:
MAP OF PERCENT FREE/REDUCED LUNCH PROGRAM PARTICIPATION
IN OPS HIGH SCHOOLS[4]

Legend

<20%	20-40%	40-60%	60-80%	>80%	No Data

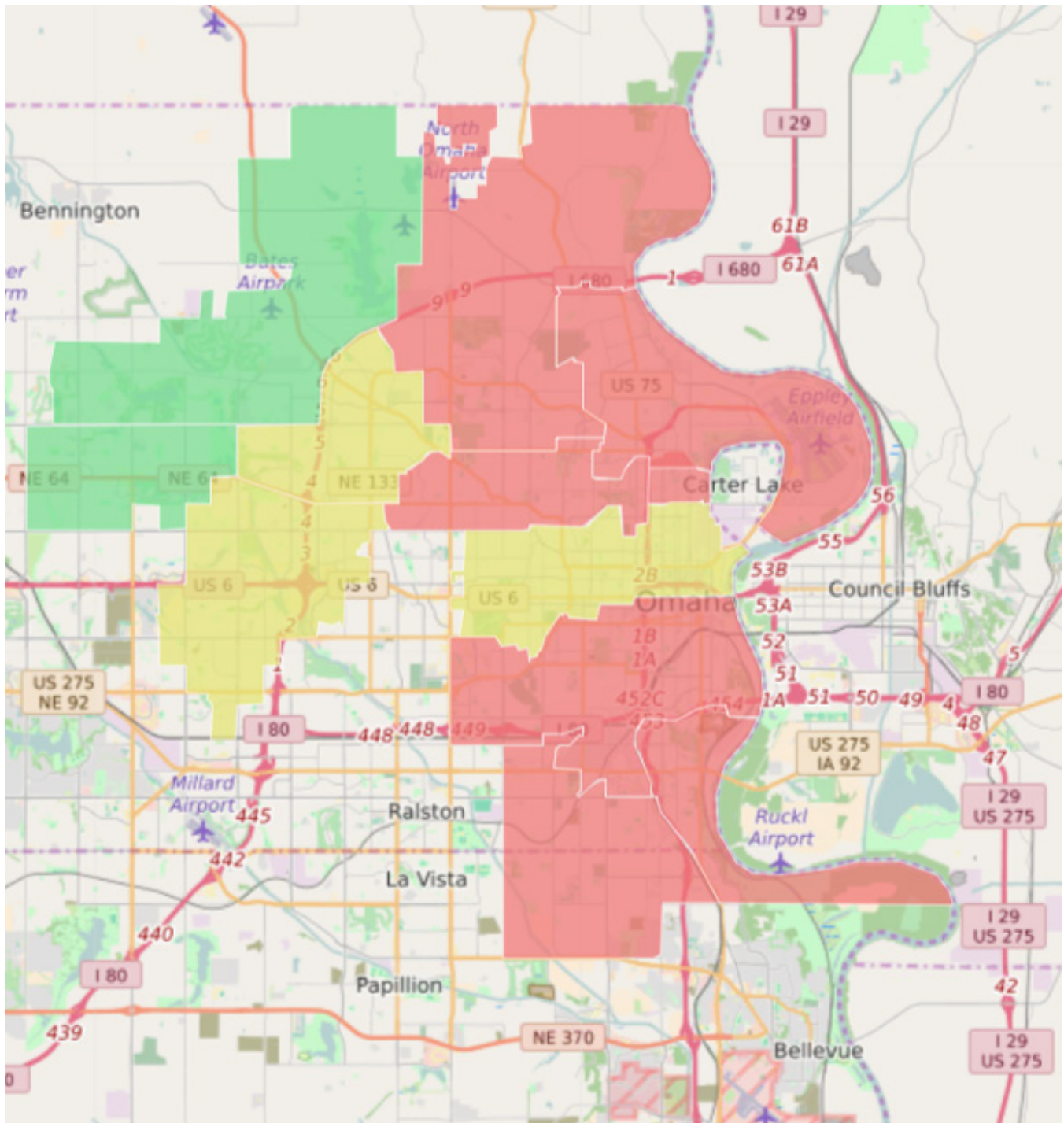4. Source: https://www.zipdatamaps.com/schools/nebraska/district/map-of-omaha-public-schools-ne-high-school-free-lunch-program

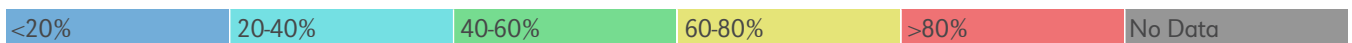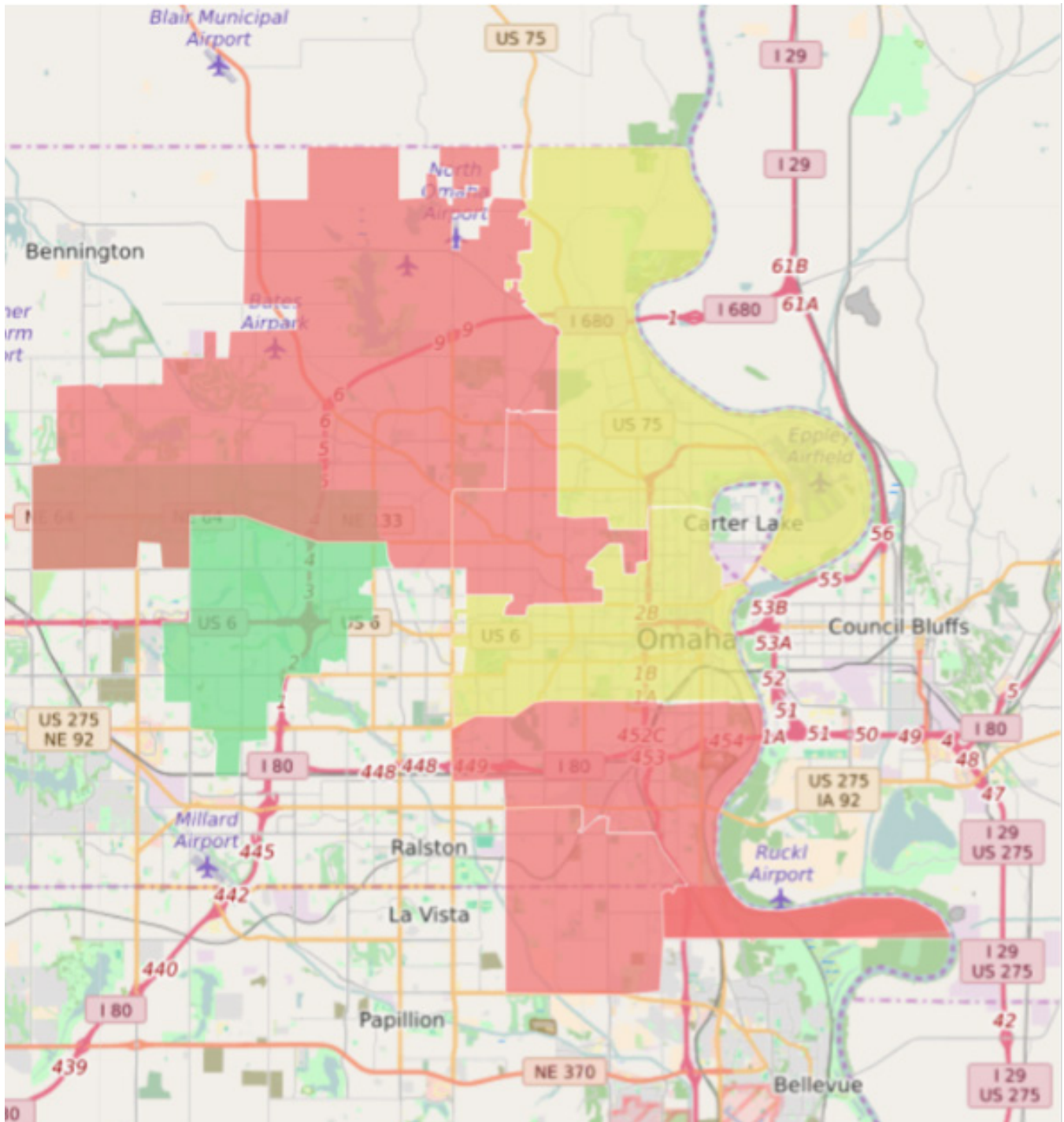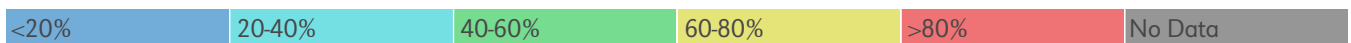| Table 3. Omaha High Schools with More Than 80% Free/Reduced Lunch Program Participation		
School	Zip Code	Free/Reduced Lunch Program Participation
Benson Magnet High School	68104	88.11%
Omaha South Magnet High School	68107	87.73%
Bryan High School	68157	85.46%
Omaha Northwest Magnet High School	68134	80.08%

Recent Federal and State Anti-Poverty Policy Efforts

The City of Omaha's development of a poverty elimination action plan occurs within a complex ecosystem of anti-poverty efforts. The public sector and each level of government have each historically played a role in poverty alleviation – private sector employment and economic development play crucial roles in determining poverty rates. Additionally, policies and programs at federal, state, and local levels create an interconnected framework that shapes economic opportunities and outcomes for Omaha residents. This section examines key federal and state policy initiatives that influence the landscape of poverty reduction in Omaha, providing essential context for the City's action plan.

National Efforts

Since the 1970s, government programs have had a substantial impact on poverty in the U.S. Between 1970 and 2022, after accounting for the impact of government transfers, poverty fell by nearly 30% (U.S. Census, 2023). Notably, this reduction excludes pandemic-era programs, which reduced SPM poverty to 7.8% in 2021, the lowest poverty rate in recent history. Among these efforts, the expanded Child Tax Credit alone reduced child poverty by 3.1 percentage points, though its expiration led to a 2.0 percentage point increase in child poverty (White House, 2023).

Beyond the Child Tax Credit, other federal programs have contributed significantly to reducing poverty. These include Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for the elderly and disabled (introduced in 1974), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, expanded nationwide in 1974), the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC, introduced in 1975), and various forms of rental assistance and Social Security (Parrott, 2022). Social Security has lifted more people out of poverty than any other program. Despite the successes of these policies, large gaps remain in U.S. anti-poverty policies, especially regarding child poverty (Parrott, 2022).

The U.S. has a higher proportion of children living in families with incomes below half of the national median than comparable wealthy nations. This disparity largely results from insufficient government assistance for low-income families with children (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2023).

Pandemic Relief

The COVID-19 pandemic spurred temporary expansions to existing anti-poverty programs, which had a profound impact on poverty rates. Despite economic hardships that resulted from the pandemic, anti-poverty programs decreased SPM poverty between 2019 and 2021 as compared to 2017-2019 (Sawo, 2022). Key programs during this period included SNAP, the refundable Child Tax Credit, and increased funding for TANF. As federal pandemic relief has expired, several states have enacted state-level replacements. For example, 11 states have created their own refundable Child Tax Credits to support low-income families (Davis & Butkus, 2023).

Recent State-Level Anti-Poverty Efforts in Nebraska

Nebraska has implemented several recent initiatives aimed at reducing poverty, focusing primarily on direct financial assistance, minimum wage increases, and expanded access to food security programs.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

The State of Nebraska receives approximately $56.6 million annually from the federal government through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. However, only 30% of the available funds are currently used as direct assistance for needy families through Nebraska's Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program, partly due to high rejection rates—around 90% of applications are denied, one of the highest rates in the country (NDHHS, 2023). This has resulted in Nebraska having nearly $126 million in unspent federal dollars (Hammel, 2023). In 2024, the Nebraska Legislature passed two bills to improve TANF utilization in the state.

LB233: Revisions to Aid to Dependent Children Policies

Nebraska's Aid to Dependent Children program will end the penalty recipients currently experience for any child support paid. If an individual receives ADC and child support payments paid to the recipient, the state captures these payments to help recover the cost of the ADC program. Beginning July 1, 2027, recipients will be able to receive up to $100 a month in child support payments, or $200 a month if the family has more than one child. Additionally, this amount of child support will not be counted as income when determining eligibility (Nebraska Legislature, 2024, LB233).

LB871: State Report on Use of TANF Funding

This bill requires the state of Nebraska to produce an annual report describing the use of TANF dollars, enhancing transparency in fund allocation (Nebraska Legislature, 2024, LB871).

Increased Minimum Wage (Initiative 433)

In addition to TANF reforms, Nebraska has raised its minimum wage. Nebraska's minimum wage is currently $12 an hour and will continue to increase to $15 by 2026. After 2026, wages will be adjusted annually based on the cost of living. This increase was implemented through Initiative 433, a ballot measure passed in 2022, reflecting the state's commitment to ensuring fair wages for low-income workers (Nebraska Public Media, 2022).

SNAP Expansion

Finally, the Nebraska Legislature expanded SNAP eligibility in 2023 by increasing the gross income limit from 130% to 165% of the Federal Poverty Level. This adjustment makes SNAP benefits accessible to over 10,000 additional Nebraskans through September 30, 2025. This expansion comes at no cost to the state, as SNAP benefits are federally funded. However, the program's administration costs are shared between the federal and state government (Nebraska Legislature, 2023, LB108).

While recent changes demonstrate Nebraska's commitment to poverty reduction, several proposed bills aimed at further alleviating poverty have not passed. These include bills to establish a Nebraska-specific Child Tax Credit, increase eligibility for ADC, expand summer grocery benefits for low-income families with school-aged children, and provide universal free school meals to all students in the state.

Summary of Existing Federal and State Poverty Work

In addressing poverty within Omaha, Douglas County, and across Nebraska, it is evident that a multifaceted approach is essential to effectively tackle the root causes and mitigate the consequences of economic hardship. By exploring both the Official Poverty Measure (OPM) and the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM), this report underscores the importance of using comprehensive metrics to understand poverty more accurately and to inform policy decisions. The data on racial and educational disparities in poverty rates within Douglas County further highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions to address systemic inequalities that perpetuate economic

instability. While historical and recent anti-poverty efforts, including federal programs and Nebraska's state-specific initiatives, have led to measurable reductions in poverty, significant gaps remain—particularly in addressing child poverty and supporting low-income families. Expansions in SNAP, increased minimum wages, and reforms to TANF reflect progress, but the expiration of pandemic-era support programs reminds us of the importance of sustainable, long-term solutions. Moving forward, Nebraska's policymakers should enact transformative, evidence-based policies that not only reduce poverty but also create pathways to economic security and well-being for all residents.

While this section summarized governmental efforts to address poverty there are additionally a variety of non-governmental efforts. Non-governmental anti-poverty efforts in Omaha constituted one section of our data collection efforts and are, hence, included primarily in the Resource and Service Accessibility section. Additional organizations are also referenced throughout the promising practices sections under the Key Components of Poverty Elimination heading, highlighting their contributions to poverty reduction.

Methodology for Collection and Analysis of Original Data

LB 840, Section 5(1)(a) mandates a comprehensive needs assessment to identify challenges in housing, education, health care, employment, access to capital, economic development, and social services within target areas to inform the Poverty Elimination Action Plan. Needs assessments play a critical role in shaping policy decisions by providing data on social issues prior to developing solutions to address them (Watkins, West-Meiers, & Visser, 2011). Additionally, LB 840, Section 5(1)(b) emphasizes the importance of community engagement as a key component in the plan's development. Following these guidelines, the UNO evaluation team and the City of Omaha collected and analyzed multiple data sources to inform the Poverty Elimination Action Plan, as outlined in Table 4 below. These data include community organizations (i.e., organization survey, organization meetings), City of Omaha (i.e., review of City programs, interviews with key staff), community engagement (i.e., poverty trees, community feedback survey), and secondary data (i.e., American Community Survey).

Table 4. Poverty Elimination Action Plan Needs Assessment Data	
Data Category	Source of Data
Part 1: Community Organizations	
	Organization Survey
	Organization Meetings
Part 2: City of Omaha	
	Review of City Programs
	Interviews with Key Staff
Part 3: Community Engagement	
	Poverty Trees
	Community Feedback Survey
Part 4: Secondary Data	
	American Community Survey

Part 1: Community Organizations Survey and Meetings

The project began by engaging professionals and community organizations involved in poverty alleviation, particularly those working directly with individuals affected by poverty. A survey was distributed to 92 organizations to learn about their efforts in alignment with LB 840, resulting in 38 analyzable responses (a 41.3% response rate). The survey, included in Appendix A, asked about targeted poverty needs, specific activities, geographic focus, outcomes, the organization's mission as it relates to poverty, and unmet community needs. These responses are summarized in Appendix B. Additionally, the evaluation team and City staff representatives met with select organizations to gather more in-depth information about their ongoing efforts. Data from community organizations were used to inform subsequent "Promising Practices to Consider" sections and prioritize interventions in the Poverty Elimination Action Plan.

Part 2: Capturing Poverty Alleviation Efforts by the City of Omaha

Next, an email was sent to all City of Omaha departments requesting information on current efforts to alleviate poverty-related challenges for community members. This information was reviewed and categorized by the poverty-related needs addressed and associated funding sources. A summary of targeted intervention efforts is presented in Appendix D. Evaluators also interviewed several staff from the planning department to learn more about their ongoing projects addressing poverty alleviation. The interviews were coded for themes and are presented in the Resource and Service Accessibility section below. Together, these data inform the overview, promising practices, and prioritization sections of the report and are summarized in Appendix C.

Part 3: Community Engagement to Capture Public Perspectives

Two community engagement events were subsequently hosted to gather input from Omaha residents on what the Poverty Elimination Action Plan should include. Attendees were welcomed by community, city and UNO graduate student volunteers and seated at round tables alongside other community members and two additional event facilitators. Characteristics of attendees are provided in Appendix E. The agenda featured welcoming remarks, a brief presentation on data collected to date, future plans, and a facilitated discussion where attendees identified causes and solutions to poverty using tree diagrams (Appendix F). The responses noted on the poverty tree diagrams

were gleaned for themes and categorized into various poverty needs. Themes derived from these discussions are summarized in Appendices G and H. Additionally, a quantitative summary of the solution suggestions from engagement event attendees are presented in Appendix I.

For those unable to attend the events or wanting to provide additional input, a community survey was made available via social media, the City of Omaha's website, at community organizations, in libraries and parks, and in street outreach (Appendix J). Characteristics of survey respondents are presented in Appendix K, and the areas respondents recommended be the focus of the plan are presented in Appendix L. Additionally, general community views about poverty are presented in Appendix M. Open-ended survey responses were coded for themes. Insights from these community engagement efforts are incorporated into the community perspectives sections of the report and were integral to shaping promising practices and prioritizing needs.

Part 4: Secondary Data Comparisons

Finally, a comparative analysis was conducted to benchmark Omaha against other similarly sized midwestern cities and nationally on metrics related to poverty, such as educational attainment and median monthly housing cost. We utilized the American Community Survey (ACS) to do this. The ACS is conducted annually by the U.S. Census Bureau and provides detailed data on demographic, social, economic, and housing characteristics to aid decision-making. These data are presented in the overview sections to provide context for the need prioritization process.

UNO evaluation team and graduate student volunteers after completing a community engagement event.

City of Omaha staff providing a presentation for community members at community engagement event.

Poverty Elimination Action Plan

Having reviewed national policies aimed at addressing poverty and the methodology used to collect needs assessment data, we now present the Poverty Elimination Action Plan. The plan begins with the Resource and Service Accessibility section, which outlines the resources and services identified to assist individuals living in poverty.

Next, we delve into each of the need domains specified in LB 840. For each domain, we provide:

1. A brief overview of the poverty component.

2. Community perspectives on the specific poverty need.

3. Promising practices that the City of Omaha, private donors, and/or state policymakers could adopt by integrating these perspectives with research insights.

Finally, we conclude with prioritized recommendations, highlighting the needs that require immediate attention.

Resource and Service Accessibility

The evaluation team started the needs assessment efforts by taking inventory of what Omaha is currently doing to reduce poverty. This includes government and non-government managed efforts. The evaluation team sent a survey to organizations who alleviate poverty, asking for additional references of other organizations along the way, and gathered data about non-profits alleviating poverty in Omaha and beyond (n=33). The organizations that identified themselves in the survey responses are listed in Table 5. We also took inventory of City of Omaha efforts that alleviate poverty for community members. The list of City of Omaha efforts we compiled that are currently alleviating poverty are provided in Table 6.

After compiling a list of City efforts that alleviate poverty, the evaluation team gathered valuable insights into Omaha's poverty elimination efforts through interviews with City planning committee staff. These interviews provided more information on the City's strategies and challenges in addressing key issues like housing affordability, homelessness, transportation, and workforce development.

The first interview summarized discussions with the City of Omaha Department staff. On housing affordability, the City developed and is implementing a Housing Affordability Action Plan (HAAP) that includes zoning changes and a housing development fund. This plan aims to address issues such as the impact of outside investors and Airbnb regulations on the housing market, especially for younger generations struggling to afford housing. Regarding homelessness, the City's homeless services coordinator is examining connections between redlining and zoning. For transportation, significant investments in public transit, such as the ORBIT system, mark a major shift toward improving mobility, along with a comprehensive bike and pedestrian plan called CONNECT Omaha, which is part of the city's climate action plan. Workforce development efforts include a focus on green jobs, workforce training, and trade opportunities, with initiatives to enhance coordination among the city, businesses, nonprofits, and funders. Housing and mobility access are identified as top priorities for poverty elimination, with additional exploration into the impact of homeowner's insurance on affordability. Overall, the City is adopting a multifaceted approach to creating an equitable and sustainable community.

The second interview highlighted several programs and initiatives addressing poverty and housing affordability. The City's Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) program has provided over $6 million in rental assistance to more than 16,000 households since its launch in 2021. ARPA funds are being utilized to develop 1,200 affordable housing units in partnership with Front Porch Investment, with an emphasis on mixed-income developments near transit. For the first time in 30 years, the City is updating its strategic plan and engaging the community on topics such as rent control and tax-increment financing. Additionally, the City is using $20 million in HUD funds for low-interest loans to support housing projects in Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas (NRSAs). Other initiatives include selling vacant lots for redevelopment, collaborating with Omaha by Design to create housing plexes, and addressing the costs of transportation and childcare. Despite these efforts, challenges persist, including the risk of increased evictions as rental assistance funds run out, sustaining support beyond initial funding periods, and ensuring equitable housing access for all residents. The City is also grappling with the broader question of whether housing should be viewed as an investment or a public good.

The third interview focused on the efforts of the Department of Community Development. This department receives $150 million in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, which support programs such as Senior Home Repair, addressing maintenance and physical barriers in homes, and lead remediation in areas impacted by environmental contamination. A Choice Neighborhood Grant program redevelops public housing into mixed-use developments, while the Section 3 program provides training and employment opportunities for low-income contractors and workers. The department develops five-year and annual plans in collaboration with HUD and engages with the community through events and outreach to raise awareness about available resources. While these initiatives have received positive feedback, the department recognizes the need for additional resources and strategies to address poverty comprehensively. Suggestions for improvement include expanding the tax lien process, addressing barriers for immigrant and non-citizen residents accessing federal programs, and implementing trauma-informed strategies to support low-income individuals and families. The department remains focused on leveraging federal funding, such as CDBG and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG), but acknowledges the need for more resources and policy changes to ensure long-term success and stability for Omaha's low-income residents.

Together, these interviews highlight Omaha's strategic efforts and the challenges in creating sustainable solutions for poverty elimination.

	Table 5. Self-Identified Organizations Who Participated in Poverty Elimination Action Plan Survey	
Program	**Description**	**Primary Needs Targeted**
1. Salvation Army	Offers programs providing food, housing, and material assistance to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.	Employment, Housing, Other
2. Latino Economic Development Council*	Focuses on economic empowerment within the Latino community through business development and financial education.	Education, Employment
3. Delivering Infinite Book Shelves (DIBS) for Kids*	Aims to improve literacy by providing software and books to children, enhancing educational opportunities.	Education
4. Saving Grace Perishable Food Rescue*	Rescues excess perishable food and redirects it to feed those in need, addressing hunger and food waste.	Health
5. Everyday Science*	Engages youth in science education to inspire future careers and break the cycle of poverty through education.	Education, Other
6. Project Harmony*	Project Harmony provides prevention, intervention, and post-intervention services to youth and families related to abuse and neglect.	Education, Health, Safety, Transportation
7. Heart Ministry Center*	Offers necessities, educational programs, and healthcare services to individuals affected by poverty.	Education, Employment, Health, Transportation
8. Creighton University*	Engages in community outreach programs focused on education, healthcare, and social services to uplift underserved populations.	Education, Health
9. Family Housing Advisory Services, Inc.*	Provides housing counseling, financial education, and advocacy to prevent homelessness and promote homeownership.	Education, Employment, Health, Transportation
10. Nebraska Diaper Bank*	Supplies diapers to families in need, ensuring children's health and enabling parents to allocate resources to other essentials.	Health, Other
11. Completely Kids*	Offers after-school and family programs to empower kids and families to break the cycle of poverty through education and support.	Education
12. Omaha Bridges Out of Poverty*	Empowers under-resourced individuals to change their lives by discovering and overcoming barriers to success.	Education
13. RISE*	Focuses on empowering individuals with criminal histories to break the cycle of incarceration and poverty through character development, job readiness, and entrepreneurship.	Education, Employment, Health, Housing, Safety, Transportation, Other

14. United Way Midlands*	Improves health and well-being by providing food access, shelter, and health services, aiming to reduce poverty in the community.	Education, Employment, Health, Housing, Transportation, Other
15. Metropolitan Area Planning Agency*	Works on regional planning and development initiatives to improve economic opportunities and quality of life.	Employment, Health, Housing, Safety, Transportation
16. University of Nebraska Omaha*	Engages in community service and research initiatives aimed at addressing local poverty and related issues.	Education, Other
17. Eastern Nebraska Community Action Partnership*	Provides services to reduce poverty, revitalize low-income communities, and empower families toward self-sufficiency.	Employment, Health, Housing, Transportation, Other
18. Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce*	Promotes economic growth and development, aiming to create job opportunities and reduce poverty.	Employment
19. Threshold CoC*	Collaborates with community partners to provide housing and supportive services to individuals experiencing homelessness.	Housing
20. Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative*	Supports early childhood education providers to ensure quality education for children, laying a foundation to break the cycle of poverty.	Education, Employment, Health, Housing
21. Visiting Nurse Association*	Offers healthcare services to individuals in their homes, ensuring access to medical care regardless of economic status.	Health
22. Foodbank for the Heartland*	Distributes food to those in need across Nebraska and western Iowa, addressing hunger and food insecurity.	Health, Other
23. Heartland Workforce Solutions*	Provides employment and training services to job seekers, enhancing skills and employment opportunities.	Employment
24. Omaha Center for Refugee & Immigrant Services Inc.*	Offers support services to refugees and immigrants, aiding in their integration and economic self-sufficiency.	Education, Employment, Housing, Transportation
25. Heartland Hope Mission*	Provides basic necessities, including food and clothing, to individuals and families in need, promoting self-sufficiency.	Employment, Other
26. Urban League of Nebraska*	Empowers African Americans and other emerging ethnic communities through advocacy, education, and economic development.	Education, Employment, Health, Housing, Safety, Transportation, Other
27. Omaha Public Schools*	Provides education and support services to students, aiming to equip them with skills to overcome economic challenges.	Education

28. Open Door Mission*	Offers programs to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty, including food, shelter, and life-changing programs.	Education, Employment, Health, Housing, Safety, Transportation, Other
29. Canopy South*	Focuses on revitalizing neighborhoods through community development initiatives, improving living conditions and economic opportunities.	Education, Employment, Health, Housing, Safety, Transportation
30. Empowerment Network*	Collaborates with community partners to implement strategies aimed at improving economic outcomes and reducing poverty.	Education, Employment, Health, Housing, Safety
31. Metropolitan Community College*	Provides affordable education and vocational training (e.g., Career Forward), equipping individuals with skills to improve their economic status.	Education, Other
32. Medical Respite*	Provides health care, shelter, and helps individuals experiencing homelessness navigate a path towards housing.	Education, Health
33. Omaha Housing Authority*	Provides affordable housing programs and supportive services that promote self-sufficiency, including rental assistance, homeownership support, and economic empowerment initiatives.	Housing, Education

These organizations noted above provided data, links, and/or reports to the evaluation team that demonstrate their organizations support poverty alleviation.

Table 6. City of Omaha Programs that Support Poverty Alleviation		
City's Effort	Description	Primary Needs Targeted
1. Solid Waste Program	Provides solid waste collection without direct resident fees for the elderly, disabled individuals, and large families.	Health
2. Sewer Ratepayer Assistance Fund – (SRAF Program)	Helps low-income residents with sewer rate costs.	Housing, Health
3. Affordable Housing Report	Reports on City efforts to increase affordable housing.	Housing
4. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Program	Supports the development of affordable housing with the aim of mixed incomes within neighborhoods.	Housing, Health, Education
5. Choice Neighborhoods Implementation, Planning and Action Grants	Improves distressed public housing and neighborhood conditions through a comprehensive approach to neighborhood transformation.	Housing, Employment, Education, Health

6. Community Development Block Grant Program	Supports community development activities to build stronger and more resilient communities.	Housing, Other
7. Consolidated Plan	Describes Omaha's community development needs and goals developed through public participation as well as an analysis of housing and community development needs, economic conditions, and available resources.	Housing
8. Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA I & II) Funds	Provides rental assistance to prevent evictions and homelessness.	Housing
9. Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program	Helps individuals regain stable housing after a crisis or homelessness.	Housing
10. HOME Funding Assistance	Provides funds for the development and / or rehabilitation of affordable housing for rent or homeownership to low-income people.	Housing
11. HOME-American Rescue Plan (ARP) Funding	Supports affordable housing and services for those at risk of homelessness.	Housing
12. Housing Affordability Action Plan (HAAP)	Outlines strategies so all residents of Omaha have a choice of housing type and location, regardless of income.	Housing
13. Lead Superfund Site, Lead-Based Paint, and Lead Hazard Reduction Program	Reduces lead hazards in homes to protect residents' health.	Health, Housing
14. Section 3 Program	Requires job and training opportunity notification to low- and very-low-income residents on some HUD Federally funded projects.	Employment
15. Collaboration with Higher Education	Partners with colleges to increase job opportunities for low-income individuals.	Education, Employment
16. Collaboration with United Way/Jobs for America Graduates (JAG) Program	Supports at-risk youth with skills training and job placement.	Employment
17. Establishing Relationships with Support Organizations	Partners with organizations to address employment barriers for low-income individuals.	Employment
18. Omaha Public Schools Career Center Engagement	Connects students to employment pathways.	Employment

19. Outreach to Local Job Organizations	Engages with organizations to connect low-income job seekers to opportunities.	Employment
20. Participation in Targeted Job Fairs	Provides job access for underserved communities through targeted job fairs.	Employment
21. Utilization of Job Boards	Uses job boards to increase employment visibility for low-income candidates.	Employment
22. Discrimination Investigations	Addresses housing, employment, and public accommodations discrimination.	Housing, Employment
23. Economic Equity and Inclusion Program (EEIP)	Promotes growth by supporting small businesses and creating job opportunities in underserved areas.	Employment
24. Small and Emerging Small Business (SEB) Program	Supports small businesses in underserved areas with growth and workforce initiatives.	Employment
25. Restorative Justice Diversion Program	Rebuilds community-police relations through restorative justice.	Education
26. Street Improvement 5B Program	Allocates funds for infrastructure improvements in high-poverty areas.	Housing, Health, Transportation
27. South Omaha Turnback Tax Grant	Funds projects to revitalize South Omaha, addressing issues like gang violence.	All
28. Tax Increment Financing (TIF)	Finances redevelopment projects in older neighborhoods needing revitalization.	All
29. Active Mobility Network Plan	Connects Omaha's walking, bicycling, and active travel networks.	Transportation, Health
30. Comprehensive Plan Update	Guides Omaha's zoning and development to meet community needs.	All

Key Components of Poverty Elimination

Education and Job Training (LB 840 Section 5(1)(a), 5(1)(d))

The relationship between education, job training, and poverty is multifaceted and reciprocal: lower-income people are often unable to access an adequate education, and without an adequate education, people often find themselves stuck in poverty. Education is widely recognized as a powerful tool for poverty alleviation. For example, data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicates that individuals with higher educational attainment have significantly lower poverty rates: in 2014, the poverty rate for those with a bachelor's degree or higher was only 5%, compared to 29% for those without a high school diploma (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015). This disparity underscores the importance of educational attainment in reducing poverty.

> *"Education on what resources available if you are struggling even if you are working."*

Table 7 further highlights disparities in educational attainment by comparing Omaha to similar regional areas. In Omaha, 9.9% of individuals lack a high school diploma or GED, a rate slightly lower than the national average (10.7%) but higher than Kansas City, MO (8.4%). Meanwhile, Des Moines, IA, has a higher percentage (13.0%), underscoring regional differences in access to and completion of secondary education. These variations reflect broader structural factors, including resource allocation, school funding, and access to alternative education pathways.

Table 7. Educational Attainment in Omaha and Comparable Regions.				
	Omaha, NE	Kansas City, MO	Des Moines, IA	United States
% Less than HS Diploma/ GED	9.9%	8.4%	13.0%	10.7%

* U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). Educational attainment (Table S1501). American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables. U.S. Department of Commerce.
Note. Includes data from two age groups, 18 to 24 years and 25 years and over. For the 18 to 24 group data was pulled from those with "Less than high school graduate" and for the 25 years and over group, data was pulled from those with "Less than 9th grade" and "9th grade to 12th grade, no diploma."

Developing technology and globalization will contribute to a labor market in which higher education and a mastery of skills (i.e., literacy, numeracy, problem-solving, and communication), are likely to be more rewarded than they are now, with the inequality-education gap continuing to grow (Holzer, 2007). Higher education not only increases earning potential but also equips individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to access and navigate a complex job market.

> *"Not all people know how to connect to better jobs, education and training."*

Job training programs further enhance the impact of education by providing specific skills that are directly applicable to the workforce. These programs are particularly vital for individuals who may not have had access to higher education or who need to adapt to changing job market demands. By bridging the gap between education and employment, job training programs play a crucial role in helping individuals achieve economic self-sufficiency and break the cycle of poverty. Some of Omaha's institutes of higher learning are trending in a direction of providing credentials and microcredentials based on training specific job and technical skills, such as the MCC Credential College and UNO's Skills, Badges, and Microcredentials listings. Unfortunately, little research is available on the efficacy of these expanded forms of job and skills training on poverty alleviation,

employment, or increased income. We find some positive evidence, however, in examining the impact on career and technical education on levels of employment and earnings of a particularly vulnerable population...formerly justice-involved individuals. A study of such a program in Virginia indicates that both participation in, and completion of, such a program significantly increased both the likelihood of employment and average dollars earned per quarter (Lichtenberger et al., 2009).

Community Perspectives on Education and Job Training

When we surveyed community members on their perceived needs and suggested solutions, community respondents highlighted the need for improved access to education, training, and resources to help people connect to better jobs and secure employment. Key issues raised include the poor quality of public education, low graduation rates, and high absenteeism in some school districts. Suggested solutions include expanding trade schools, collaborating with businesses, providing

> *"Working with institutions to provide 100% scholarships and case management for people wanting to learn a skill that translates to a secure job earning more than minimum wage."*

financial resources and scholarships for skills-based training, and offering compensated parenting and financial literacy education programs. Financial literacy programs are associated with improved financial knowledge (Zhan, Anderson, & Scott, 2006), but one meta-analysis looking at 126 impact evaluations of these programs found that they are less effective among low-income program participants (Kaiser & Menkhoff, 2017). Additional solutions from community engagement event attendees are also provided below in Table 8.

Table 8. Education Solutions to Poverty Themes from Community Engagement Events	
North Omaha Themes	South Omaha Themes
Access and Affordability in Education; Support for Non-Traditional and Underrepresented Students; Quality Education and Youth Services; Financial Education and Literacy; Support for Educational Infrastructure and Funding; Opportunity and Equal Access	Access and Inclusivity in Education; Financial Education and Planning; Curriculum and Program Modernization; Community and Family Engagement; Technological Literacy and Workforce Preparation

There is also a call for educating community members on the historical context and root causes of these educational challenges, along with implementing youth reform summer programs and mandating voluntary efforts to receive benefits. Overall, respondents emphasized the importance of enhancing educational and vocational opportunities, particularly for underserved communities, to improve employment prospects and economic security.

> *"Compensated rather than at-cost parenting education in general would be of benefit, and financial education with stipend incentives for implementation."*

Promising Practices to Consider: Education

Building on suggestions from community members and ongoing community efforts, several approaches are recommended to address education-related poverty reduction needs in Omaha.

Early Childhood. Interventions to improve education should begin in early childhood, as significant gaps in cognitive skills among low-income and minority students often emerge before kindergarten (Fryer & Levitt, 2004; Holzer, 2007). Omaha currently offers about 25 HeadStart and public preschool programs for families with

incomes below the federal poverty level (Public Pre-K, 2025). These programs provide numerous benefits, including improved language, literacy, and math skills; reduced aggression; higher elementary school test scores; increased graduation rates; and lower rates of criminal involvement (Yoshikawa, Weiland, & Brooks-Gunn, 2016). Although private funding and scholarships support these efforts, adopting universal pre-kindergarten programs, as seen in Florida, Oklahoma, Vermont, and Washington, D.C., could provide broader and more consistent support for families.

Universal Pre-Kindergarten. Universal approaches are preferable to targeted needs-based programs because they often attract more engagement from higher-income families, raising program quality for all children (Barnett, 2010). Additionally, targeted programs can create gaps in coverage due to fluctuating family incomes and delays in accessing resources. For example, New York City's "3-K for All" initiative provides free, full-day pre-Kindergarten education for three-year-olds. Research indicates that this program has increased labor force participation among mothers in districts with higher 3-K availability, boosting household income and economic stability (Robin Hood Foundation, 2023). Additionally, children who attend universal pre-Kindergarten programs exhibit improved cognitive and social skills, which contribute to long-term educational and workforce outcomes. Similarly, a study of Oklahoma's universal pre-kindergarten program shows that children who participate in this program outperform their peers in reading and math, demonstrating the long-term benefits of early childhood education for individual and economic development (Gormley et al., 2005). Overall, research suggests that the long-term benefits of universal pre-kindergarten programs, such as increased future earnings and reduced crime, outweigh their costs (Bartik, Gormley Jr., Belford, & Anderson, 2018; Lynch & Vaghul, 2015). These benefits can be amplified through quality assurance measures and robust elementary and high school systems. Supporting organizations like the Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative can further strengthen early education efforts in Omaha.

Omaha Public Schools. Omaha Public Schools (OPS) faces challenges compared to higher-performing neighboring districts like Elkhorn and Millard, which consistently achieve better academic results on a national scale (Niche, 2025). Improving OPS will require a multifaceted approach, including investments in teacher professional development and retention, as teacher quality is strongly linked to student success (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Journal of IMSE, 2022; Yoon et al., 2007). For example, research indicates that directing increased school funding at under-resourced districts improves both student achievement and rates of completed schooling, both of which have been linked to reductions in intergenerational poverty (Jackson & Mackeviscious, 2021). Moreover, early intervention programs for struggling students can help close achievement gaps, especially for low-income populations (Reynolds et al., 2001). Strengthening the curriculum in critical areas such as mathematics and reading can better prepare students for academic and career opportunities (Schmidt et al., 2002; Sirinides, Gray, & May, 2018). Supporting organizations like DIBS for Kids, Everyday Science, and Completely Kids could also bolster education for OPS students.

Private Sector Partnerships. Improved private sector partnerships with local middle and high schools to provide career and technical education could prepare Omaha's future workforce. Evaluations by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) show that career academies increased earnings by 18% for at-risk men within four years of high school graduation (Kemple, 2004). For example, local educational professionals should track the success of Fremont Public School's new Career and Technical Education Center as a local example of preparing youth for quality jobs in the trades. The MDRC also found that minority and low-income students participating in these programs attended post-secondary institutions at rates similar to control groups, despite earning higher wages, suggesting the program did not track low-income students into trade focused employment relative to higher education (Kemple, 2004).

Higher Education. For students pursuing post-secondary education, several programs support individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. UNO's Durango Advancement & Support Hub (DASH) provides scholarships, basic needs resources, peer mentoring, and resiliency support. The university's North Omaha Initiative offers community-driven education through the Urban League of Nebraska. Metropolitan Community College (MCC) provides affordable education and vocational training, along with programs like "Career Forward," Student Support Services, the Gap Assistance Program, financial aid, scholarships, and emergency grants. Increasing support and awareness of these programs could positively impact poverty reduction efforts. MCC's Career

Forward might provide a blueprint for successful efforts in this area. This grant-funded program is designed to provide supplemental financial support, scholarships, funding for books and other educational and training tools, connections to employment, career coaching, and basic skills support in the classroom to enable individuals who were negatively impacted by COVID-19, and are currently unemployed or underemployed, to receive short-term skills training and job placement services offered in cooperation with state and federal workforce funding systems.

Adult Education. While improving the education system for children and young adults is critical, many adults would benefit from education opportunities if they could balance these with personal responsibilities. Labor-market intermediaries, which link employers and training providers, play a vital role in helping learners access financial and other support needed to upskill while maintaining income streams (Holzer, 2007). Some programs collaborate with employers to develop career ladders and human resources policies that reward skill acquisition (Holzer, 2007). Tax credits for organizations offering training and upskilling opportunities could incentivize further efforts by the private sector. Such initiatives could benefit both the public and private sectors through increased worker productivity, higher earnings, and greater tax revenue (Ahlstrand, Bassi, & McMurrer, 2003).

Conclusions and Recommendations for Omaha. Education plays a vital role in preventing poverty throughout all stages of life, with early childhood programs offering particularly effective, long-lasting benefits. Success in addressing poverty and developing a skilled workforce in the Omaha metro area requires strong partnerships between educational institutions, government agencies, and private organizations. At the K-12 level, schools must focus on addressing student attendance issues while preparing students for both trade schools and college. Higher education institutions must adapt their programs to better accommodate students facing financial challenges. Additionally, continuing education programs are crucial for working adults who need to update their skills to remain competitive in our rapidly evolving, technology-driven economy.

Economic Development and Employment (LB 840 Section 5(1)(a), 5(1)(g))

The relationship between economic development, employment, and poverty is complex. Generally, economic growth should lift people out of poverty. When the economy expands, there are usually more jobs available, and wages tend to go up. This means more people have the money to meet their basic needs. However, the reality is often more complicated. Economic growth frequently does not benefit everyone equally unless significant efforts are made to target economic benefits for lower-income citizens. And even when people do find jobs, those jobs might not pay enough to actually escape poverty. For example, MIT's living wage calculator indicates that an adult with no dependents would need to make $21.03 per hour to cover basic needs like food, housing, transportation, etc. (Glasmeier, 2025). In January 2025, Nebraska's minimum wage increased from $12.00 to $13.50, but this is still more than $7.50 short per hour, and $60.00 short per day and (over a 52-week year) $15,600 short per week of reaching a living wage.

For a single parent with two children, a living wage is $48.46 per hour (Glasmeier, 2025), so minimum wage of $13.50 per hour is nearly $35 short per hour, which is $280 short per day, and $72,800 short per year. Finally, for two working parents with two children, each parent would need to make $26.74 per hour to achieve a living wage (Glasmeier, 2025), so the new minimum wage is more than $13 short per hour per parent, $104 short per day per parent, and over $27,000 short per year per parent, for a total household deficit of over $54,000 compared to a living wage. These numbers are sobering and make it clear that employment is an obvious solution for addressing poverty, but even full-time employment is frequently not a sole solution for addressing household poverty. Consequently, all poverty elimination efforts in the area of economic development and employment must not just focus on jobs, but rather focus on good jobs that pay at least a living wage. Moreover, as quality health care, retirement benefits, and other mechanisms for avoiding poverty over one's life course are most commonly tied to employment in the United States, these good jobs also must include good benefits.

So, to understand how we can use economic development to reduce poverty, we need to look closely at these uneven effects. We need to ask how we can create inclusive growth that benefits everyone, not just the wealthy few. The non-profit Center for American Progress, for example, argues that targeted economic develop is necessary

for communities facing sustained economic hardship. For example, tax incentives can be used to direct private economic development in disadvantaged communities (Vinelli & Weller, 2021).

However, poverty is stubborn (Benzow et al., 2023). Spatial mismatches result in high-poverty neighborhoods that are often physically distant from burgeoning employment centers. Skills mismatches refer to a gap between the skills of local workers and skill-requirements by employers. Finally, impoverished neighborhoods tend to stay poor as housing becomes devalued, schools become underfunded, services disappear, and "brain-drain" occurs as talented youth leave for greener pastures. Research indicates that only 7% of high-poverty counties in 1990 had successfully risen above a designation of high poverty nearly 30 years later (Benzow et al., 2023).

Research suggests some hope, however. For example, there is empirical evidence that Community Reinvestment Act small business loans promote county-level business growth (Rupasingha & Wang, 2017). Moreover, data show that, on average, 87% of state job growth comes from homegrown firms and entrepreneurs (Mazerov & Leachman, 2016), so investing in our own people and our own communities is not only morally desirable, but also an approach supported by data and research. Public-private partnerships are another mechanism for urban development which has been particularly popular and successful in Omaha. The most recent example is Metro's new microtransit pilot program that would expand the reach of Omaha' current public transit network[5]. Other examples include the CHI Health Center arena and convention center, the Omaha Veterans Affairs Ambulatory Care Center, Avenue Scholars internship program connecting students with businesses, housing development loans provided by Front Porch Investments (Lee, 2024), and a collaboration between the City of Omaha and Habitat for Humanity to build 85 single-family homes on 51st and Sorenson Parkway (Ashford, 2021).

While these public-private partnerships demonstrate promising approaches to economic development, a closer look at Omaha's employment and earnings data reveals both strengths and persistent challenges. Omaha's employment rate (66.5%) is comparable to Kansas City, MO and Des Moines, IA, and well above the national average (59.8%), as shown in Table 9. However, this does not necessarily translate to economic security, as earnings vary widely by occupation. Service occupations, which employ a significant portion of the workforce, offer a median wage of just $24,263, far below the living wage threshold, as detailed in Table 10. Additionally, unemployment disparities remain disproportionately high for certain demographics, particularly Black workers (10.6%) and young workers aged 16–19 (15.2%), as indicated in Table 11. These figures highlight the need for targeted economic policies that not only increase employment but also ensure equitable access to higher-paying jobs.

Table 9. Employment Across Omaha and Comparable Regions				
	Omaha, NE	Kansas City, MO	Des Moines, IA	United States
Employed	66.5%	65.4%	66.6%	59.8%
Unemployed	4.2%	4.7%	5.7%	5.2%

U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). Employment status (Table S2301). American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables. U.S. Department of Commerce.
Note. The table includes data for the population aged 16 years and older. Estimates are taken from the employment/population ratio and the unemployment rate. The percentage of individuals not in the labor force was calculated using estimates from the labor force participation rate.

5. https://www.ometro.com/metro-news/metro-invites-public-to-comment-on-microtransit-pilot-program/

Table 10. Median Earnings by Industry Across Omaha and Comparable Regions				
Industry	Omaha, NE	Kansas City, MO	Des Moines, IA	United States
Management, business, and financial occupations	75,028	72,111	68,444	82,543
Computer, engineering, and science occupations	85,053	80,447	78,030	93,819
Education, legal, community service, arts, and media occupations	49,105	50,030	49,432	52,817
Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations	68,701	62,167	59,418	71,383
Service occupations	24,263	27,690	24,972	25,821
Sales and office occupations	40,130	40,265	38,518	39,120
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	44,959	44,272	48,185	47,864
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	36,467	36,508	37,804	38,665

U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). Occupation by sex and median earnings in the past 12 months (in 2023 inflation-adjusted dollars) for the civilian employed population 16 years and over (Table S2411). American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables. U.S. Department of Commerce.
Note. Data pulled from median earnings in the past 12 months for the employed population aged 16 years and over.

Table 11. Unemployment Rates by Demographics Across Omaha and Comparable Regions				
Age	Omaha, NE	Kansas City, MO	Des Moines, IA	United States
16 to 19 years	15.2%	12.4%	16.9%	14.3%
20 to 24 years	6.1%	7.0%	9.5%	9.1%
25 to 29 years	3.5%	4.8%	5.6%	5.9%
30 to 34 years	3.0%	5.5%	4.1%	4.9%
35 to 44 years	2.6%	3.9%	4.0%	4.3%
45 to 54 years	4.0%	3.5%	5.9%	3.9%
55 to 59 years	3.3%	3.9%	2.6%	3.8%
60 to 64 years	3.4%	2.9%	3.5%	3.7%
65 to 74 years	3.1%	3.4%	3.6%	3.9%
75 years and over	5.5%	3.2%	3.8%	3.9%
Sex[1]				
Male	3.5%	3.9%	4.9%	4.9%
Female	3.6%	5.1%	5.4%	4.8%
Race				
American Indian and Alaska Native	4.8%	1.8%	1.8%	7.9%
Asian	5.3%	3.3%	5.4%	4.3%
Black	10.6%	7.3%	10.7%	8.7%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	6.7%	17.9%	0.0%	7.2%
White	3.0%	3.7%	5.0%	4.3%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	4.6%	4.6%	6.5%	6.0%
Other	4.9%	5.5%	7.7%	6.2%
Two or more races	4.8%	5.0%	5.7%	6.5%

U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). Employment status (Table S2301). American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables. U.S. Department of Commerce.
1Population 20 to 64 years of age

Community Perspectives on Economic Development and Employment

Respondents mentioned that wages in Omaha are not keeping up with the rising costs of living, particularly for housing, food, and other essential expenses. They reported a disconnect between the types of jobs available and the training needed for well-paying, livable-wage positions. Some brought up jobs advertised pay only $15-20 per hour, which is insufficient to afford a two-bedroom apartment at the fair market rent. This disproportionately impacts the working poor and non-English speakers, who face barriers in navigating the system to find suitable employment and housing. Additionally, the lack of employment areas where economically disadvantaged individuals live was also mentioned at a meeting with community organization members.

"Poverty limits are too low and/ or low-income working class are impacted negatively in all of the above mentioned areas even though they aren't in "poverty." Also, there are not enough actual well-paying jobs and/or disparity in income/pay."

To address these challenges, survey respondents shared several recommendations, including economic empowerment, improved access to healthcare, education, community safety, and mental health services. Additionally, respondents indicated that solutions should focus on creating more well-paying jobs, small business loans/grants, implementing job training and apprenticeship programs, and ensuring businesses pay a living wage. Upwardly mobile career opportunities close to home are also crucial for the economic stability and growth of the local community.

"Wages are not consistent with inflation and rising prices for everything from food to housing and all in between."

"There does not seem to be a deep enough effort to connect the types of jobs available and the training needed for those jobs. Particularly for jobs that pay a livable wage. Wages in Omaha seem pretty low and anytime I scroll through Indeed or other job site, the vast majority of them are low-skill jobs that pay $15-20/hr. $20/hr. at full time is only $41,600. That is not a living wage for a family and a lot of those jobs are not even full-time. Using HUD's 2024 Fair Market Rent of $1,170, people need to make $3,900 a month ($46,800/yr, $22.50/hr.)) to afford (at 30% of their gross income, working a typical 40-hour week) a two-bedroom unit on their own. So, which comes first? The healthy, affordable housing or the education/training or employment?"

Table 12. Economic-Employment Solutions to Poverty Themes from Community Engagement Events	
North Omaha Themes	South Omaha Themes
Workforce Support and Employment Opportunities; Fair and Livable Wages; Flexible Work Schedules and Better Work-Life Balance; Social Support and Infrastructure; Economic and Community Development; Equity and Inclusivity	Fair Wages and Economic Equity; Workplace Benefits and Flexibility; Workforce Development and Inclusivity; Community and Corporate Engagement

Promising Practices to Consider: Economic Development and Employment

Poverty remains a pervasive challenge, but cities worldwide have implemented innovative practices to reduce it through employment and economic development strategies. Omaha can build on these examples and implement tailored solutions to address local poverty. Among these approaches, childcare assistance, increasing the minimum wage, implementing workforce development initiatives, and transit-oriented development have emerged as critical tools for economic development. These initiatives not only alleviate immediate financial burdens but also create pathways for long-term economic mobility, foster workforce participation, and promote equitable growth. This report highlights effective strategies from other cities and offers recommendations for Omaha to consider in its efforts to eliminate poverty.

Childcare Assistance: Supporting Parents and Economic Growth. Affordable childcare is a cornerstone of economic development because it enables parents, particularly mothers, to participate in the workforce. High-quality, affordable childcare reduces the financial burden on families and fosters early childhood development, which has long-term positive effects on educational attainment and workforce readiness.

New York City's "Child Care Subsidy Program" provides financial assistance to low-income families for childcare services. This program allows parents to work or attend school while ensuring their children receive safe and educational care. Research shows that access to affordable childcare correlates with increased workforce participation and economic stability among parents (NYC Department of Social Services, 2022).

Similarly, Minneapolis, Minnesota, administers the "Think Small" program, which connects families to childcare scholarships and professional development for childcare providers. This initiative helps low-income families access quality care while fostering economic growth in the childcare industry (Think Small, 2021).

Similarly, universal pre-kindergarten is monumentally beneficial for economic development. Universal pre-kindergarten is described in greater detail on page 36 above.

Increasing the Minimum Wage: Addressing Income Inequality. Raising the minimum wage is a direct way to reduce income inequality and improve the economic well-being of low-wage workers. Evidence from cities that have implemented minimum wage increases shows a positive impact on poverty reduction without significant adverse effects on employment levels.

Seattle's phased implementation of a $15 minimum wage has been extensively studied. Research indicates that the policy led to higher earnings for low-wage workers and reduced reliance on public assistance programs, while employment levels remained stable (Reich et al., 2019). Similarly, in San Francisco, a higher minimum wage was associated with improved health outcomes for low-wage workers, as increased income allowed for better access to healthcare and nutrition (Bhatia & Katz, 2001).

Other cities, including Los Angeles and New York City, have also raised their minimum wages, resulting in measurable reductions in poverty rates among working families. These policies not only increase workers' purchasing power but also stimulate local economies through higher consumer spending.

As of January 2025, the minimum wage in Nebraska was $13.50 an hour and will increase to $15 an hour in 2026 (Neb. Rev. Stat. §48-1203.01.). However, according to the most recent estimates available, the vast majority of Omaha residents need to earn at least $21 per hour, working fulltime, to be able to afford their basic needs (Glasmeier, 2025). To achieve the goal of eliminating poverty, the minimum wage would need to be raised to $21 per hour at a minimum.

Workforce Development Programs. Workforce development programs are crucial for equipping individuals with the skills needed to access better employment opportunities. Cities like Chicago have demonstrated success through the "Chicago Workforce Partnership," which connects job seekers with employers by providing industry-specific training and job placement services (Chicago Workforce Partnership, 2021). This program focuses on high-demand sectors such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and technology, ensuring participants acquire skills that align with market needs.

In Louisville, Kentucky, the "TechHire Louisville" initiative has been particularly impactful. This program targets young adults and individuals from nontraditional backgrounds, providing them with technology training and certifications. By bridging the skills gap in tech-driven industries, TechHire has helped participants secure high-paying jobs while addressing employer demand for skilled workers (Louisville Metro Government, 2020).

Small Business Support Programs. Small businesses play a vital role in local economies, and cities have implemented programs to support entrepreneurs and small business owners as a strategy to combat poverty. Detroit's "Motor City Match" is a prominent example, providing grants, technical assistance, and real estate opportunities to small business owners. Since its inception, the program has supported over 1,300 businesses, creating jobs and revitalizing economically distressed neighborhoods (City of Detroit, 2022).

Another innovative program is the "Minneapolis Business Assistance Program," which offers financial support, mentorship, and training to minority- and women-owned businesses. This initiative helps address systemic barriers to entrepreneurship and promotes inclusive economic growth in underserved communities (City of Minneapolis, 2021).

Inclusive Hiring Initiatives. Cities have also launched inclusive hiring initiatives to ensure that economic development benefits all residents. In Atlanta, the "Invest Atlanta" initiative includes a focus on hiring individuals from low-income neighborhoods for public projects and private developments receiving City incentives. By prioritizing local hiring, the City has been able to reduce unemployment in historically underserved areas while fostering community investment (Invest Atlanta, 2021).

Similarly, San Diego's "CONNECT2Careers" program focuses on providing job opportunities for young adults from disadvantaged backgrounds. The program partners with local businesses to offer internships, apprenticeships, and full-time positions, helping participants gain valuable work experience and establish career paths (San Diego Workforce Partnership, 2022).

Comprehensive Economic Strategies. Some cities have adopted comprehensive economic strategies that integrate multiple anti-poverty initiatives. For instance, Boston's "Office of Workforce Development" coordinates efforts across sectors to provide job training, financial literacy programs, and affordable housing initiatives. This holistic approach ensures that residents have access to the resources needed to achieve economic stability and upward mobility (City of Boston, 2021).

Another example is Seattle's "Equitable Development Initiative," which aims to reduce economic disparities by investing in affordable housing, supporting small businesses, and creating community-centered economic opportunities. This initiative prioritizes equity and inclusion to ensure that all residents benefit from the city's economic growth (City of Seattle, 2022).

Public-Private Partnerships and Inclusive Policies. Collaboration between public and private sectors is essential for fostering economic development and reducing poverty. Examples include Detroit's "Motor City Match" as described on page 51 and Atlanta's "Invest Atlanta" initiative. "Invest Atlanta" provides grants, tax incentives, and low-interest loans to attract businesses and support workforce training programs. By prioritizing projects that benefit low-income communities, Omaha can ensure inclusive economic growth and foster a thriving business environment (Invest Atlanta, 2021).

Transit-Oriented Development. A promising strategy for closing the gap between employment opportunities and affordable housing for low-income residents is known as "transit-oriented development" (TOD). TOD refers to conscious efforts to locate housing, retail, grocery stores, health care, and other necessary services within walking distance of public transportation (Edwards, Crain, & Kalleberg, 2007). This method of development reduces residents' dependence on cars, while linking people to essential services, such as employment, food, health care, and employment. The City of Omaha and Metro Transit have moved towards a more "transit orientation" to guide development, both amending the City's Master Plan and adjusting zoning ordinances to promote TOD. For more information, refer to the City's website and the analytic memo, entitled "Transit-Oriented Development in Omaha, Nebraska".

Conclusion and Recommendations for Omaha. Several key strategies have proven most effective for economic development and poverty reduction in Omaha. These include expanding childcare assistance, implementing minimum wage increases, expand workforce programs (i.e. The Economic Equity and Inclusion Program, EEIP, Omaha for Small and Emerging Businesses, SEBs, and ONEBiz), and creating additional partnerships between public and private sectors. These approaches have consistently demonstrated superior results in poverty reduction compared to other interventions, as supported by research. By addressing both immediate financial hardships while also tackling the underlying barriers that prevent economic participation, these programs help families and individuals achieve financial stability and create pathways for long-term economic advancement.

Health Care Access (LB 840 Section 5(1)(a), 5(1)(f))

Poverty is both directly and indirectly related to poor health outcomes. The availability of quality health care is heavily dependent on one's financial situation (McMaughan et al., 2020). Poverty is associated with higher rates of mortality for chronic conditions, such as heart disease, liver disease, and kidney disease (Ahmad et al., 2019; Goldberg et al., 2021; Norris & Beech, 2021). Also, lack of health insurance is a major barrier to accessing health care. People without insurance are less likely to receive preventive care and more likely to experience severe health outcomes due to untreated conditions (McMaughan et al., 2020). Relatedly, the 2019 National Health Interview Survey found cost is often a factor for people delaying health care, dental care, or purchasing prescriptions (National Center for Health Statistics, 2023). Poor living conditions, such as those experienced by unhoused persons facing housing insecurity, can contribute to, and exacerbate, health problems (Loignon et al., 2015). In addition, the complexity of the health system can be overwhelming for individuals in poverty, causing them to miss out on valuable health care opportunities (Loignon et al., 2015). Finally, lower-income communities can be "healthcare deserts" where fewer quality healthcare facilities are rare or absent (Kirby, 2008).

Health care is of particular importance for our children and adequate health care can help break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Using sibling research as a control for many outside factors, less healthy siblings are more likely to grow up to be unhealthy adults and to work less and have lower incomes (Smith, 2007, 2009; Stephens & Toohey, 2022). Another natural experiment addressing the importance of healthcare for lower-income families involves Medicaid expansion, where medical care access was increased, while other family characteristics remained unchanged. Research indicates that not only did Medicaid expansion improve child health (Currie & Gruber, 1997), but the effects were also long-lasting, reducing adult disability, while increasing adult earnings (Brown et al., 2020). Overall, poverty tends to magnify the adverse impacts of shocks on child health, such as food insecurity, stress, violence, etc., even if health insurance is available (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2024). For example, a randomized control trial experiment for cancer treatment where each child received equivalent, high-quality medical care, 5-year survival rates were significantly lower for children from impoverished neighborhoods (Bona et al., 2021).

Census data suggests that 8.0% of Omaha citizens are without health care coverage (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). This is slightly higher than the national average of 7.6% (National Cener for Health Statistics, 2024). The United Way of the Midlands has provided two sources of data on heath care needs in the Omaha metro. First, two primary themes emerged from their review of 26 Nebraska- and Omaha-based reports: 1) there is a lack of access to affordable basic health services, as well as staffing shortages amongst providers, and 2) there is great variation in healthcare outcomes, access, and supports, particularly for lower income and minority populations (United Way of the Midlands, 2024). Their second source of data reflects healthcare needs and unmet needs of callers to "211," which is a one-stop source of information for people in need of assistance. The top four healthcare needs from 211 callers are 1) dental care, 2) community clinics, 3) aging and disability resource centers, and 4) medical care assistance. The top four unmet healthcare needs from 211 callers are 1) medical expense assistance, 2) dental care, 3) community clinics, and 4) prescription medication services (United Way of the Midlands, 2024). Finally, the 2021 Community Health Needs Assessment reports that persons rating their general health as "poor" or "fair" in the metro are more likely to be seniors, low-income earners, and Black or Hispanic. Moreover, infant mortality rates were found to be significantly worse for Indigenous, Black, and Hispanic populations (Professional Research Consultants, 2021).

Poverty directly impacts access to healthcare, as seen in Omaha's data. Table 13 reveals that 9.7% of Omaha residents lack health insurance, slightly above the national average of 8.6%. In terms of insurance type, Omaha has a slightly higher reliance on private insurance (57.1%) compared to the national average of 53.2%, but its lower rate of public insurance (18.8% vs. 21.3% nationally) signals a greater need for affordable, accessible healthcare options in the city. Table 14 shows that in Omaha, individuals with lower income levels are disproportionately uninsured, with 15.3% of those earning under $25,000 lacking insurance, compared to 12.4% nationally. Similarly, 34.0% of the unemployed in Omaha are uninsured, higher than the national rate of 25.3%. These tables collectively illustrate how poverty, income, and employment status in Omaha contribute to greater health disparities when compared to national averages. These disparities reinforce the need for targeted policy interventions to improve healthcare access for vulnerable populations.

Table 13. Health Insurance Coverage by Type Across Omaha and Comparable Regions

Insurance Type	Omaha, NE	Kansas City, MO	Des Moines, IA	United States
Public Insurance	18.8%	18.1%	28.1%	21.3%
Private Insurance	57.1%	56.8%	48.8%	53.2%
No Insurance	9.7%	11.3%	6.7%.	8.6%

U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). Public health insurance coverage by type and selected characteristics (Table S2704). American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables. U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). Private health insurance coverage by type and selected characteristics (Table S2703). American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables. U.S. Department of Commerce.
U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). Selected characteristics of health insurance coverage in the United States (Table S2701). American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables. U.S. Department of Commerce.
Note. Employer-based health insurance, Direct-purchase health insurance, and TRICARE/Military health coverage counts represent private insurance coverage alone. Medicare coverage, Medicaid/means-tested coverage, and VA health care coverage represent public insurance coverage alone. Data was obtained from the American Community Survey (2023).

Table 14. Selected Characteristics of Uninsured Health Coverage Across Omaha and Comparable Regions

	Omaha, NE	Kansas City, MO	Des Moines, IA	United States
Income Level				
Under $25,000	15.3%	18.6%	8.4%	12.4%
$25,000 to $49,999	16.8%	17.4%	8.4%	13.0%
$50,000 to $74,999	12.0%	13.9%	8.1%	11.5%
$75,000 to $99,999	10.1%	10.8%	6.4%	9.5%
$100,000 and over	4.8%	5.5%	4.5%	5.2%
Employment Status				
Employed	10.6%	12.5%	9.1%	10.5%
Unemployed	34.0%	39.5%	20.9%	25.3%
Poverty Status				
Below 138 percent of the poverty threshold	19.8%	21.8%	8.4%	14.7%
138 to 399 percent of the poverty threshold	11.2%	11.9%	8.4%	10.8%
At or above 400 percent of the poverty threshold	3.1%	4.3%	2.9%	3.8%
Below 100 percent of the poverty threshold	20.0%	20.7%	7.9%	14.9%

U.S. Census Bureau. (2025, January 3). Selected characteristics of health insurance coverage in the United States [American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S2701]. U.S. Department of Commerce

Key issues highlighted by respondents include a lack of easily accessible mental health services, the need for more family support rather than just programs for problem children after they've gotten in trouble, and the lack of Medicaid coverage for caregiver expenses, which can lead to loss of income for those unable to work due to caregiving responsibilities. The proposed solutions focus on creating a health center for mental health, providing access to healthcare, helping resolve mental health and substance abuse problems, establishing more community-based health providers, and offering more free opportunities for dental, vision, preventative, and routine healthcare.

"Maybe have some rehab programs?"

"Help resolve mental health and substance abuse problems."

"More free opportunities for dental vision, preventative and routine healthcare."

"A lack of affordable housing and easily accessible mental health services."

"The need for more family support, not just programs for problem children after they've gotten in trouble."

Promising Practices to Consider: Health Care Access

Building on community members' suggestions, this section outlines promising practices that could enhance health care access for individuals living in poverty. The health care industry constitutes 15% of the U.S. economy, with costs continuing to rise for Americans (Kennedy, 2008). While the recommendations presented here are within the city's scope, broader federal or state policy reforms are essential to improve health care access and equity to align the U.S. system with those of other developed nations (Blumenthal, Gumas, & Shah, 2024).

Community Health Organizations. The primary recommendation is for the private sector, the City, and/or the state of Nebraska to support existing community health organizations addressing health-related poverty needs. In Omaha, key organizations include Heart Ministry Center, Creighton University, Visiting Nurse Association, Medical Respite, OneWorld, United Way Midlands, and Charles Drew Health Center, Inc. Mental health care, heavily emphasized by community members, also requires support. Organizations providing free or low-cost mental health care in Omaha include Douglas County Community Mental Health Center, Charles Drew Health Center, Community Alliance, Heartland Family Service, UNO Community Counseling Clinic, Lutheran Family Services Urgent Mental Health Care, and the Charles Drew Health Homeless Health Care Clinic. For individuals struggling with substance abuse, CenterPointe Campus for Hope and Inroads to Recovery offer free or low-cost treatment options. Research demonstrates that community health centers providing affordable care are associated with reduced health care costs and fewer acute care

Table 15. Health Care Access Solutions to Poverty Themes from Community Engagement Events	
North Omaha Themes	South Omaha Themes
Health and Community Support Services; Workplace Reform and Work-Life Balance; Maternal and Child Health; Healthcare Equity and Education	Accessible Healthcare and Wellness; Flexibility and Inclusivity in Services; Basic Needs and Financial Support; Childcare Accessibility; Human Dignity and Rights

needs (Richard, Ku, Dor, Tan, Shin, & Rosenbaum, 2012; Streeter, Braithwaite, Ipakchi, & Johnsrud, 2009). One review estimated these centers save patients $9.9 to $24 billion nationally each year (Streeter et al., 2009).

Medical Grant and Liaison Program. The evaluation team also proposes creating a medical grant and liaison program to assist individuals with medical financial needs. This program could be funded by private donors or increased tax revenue and would allow citizens to apply for assistance to cover medical expenses not covered by insurance. Such support would help individuals avoid bankruptcy and break cycles of poverty, particularly since medical bills are one of the leading contributors to bankruptcy (Himmelstein, Lawless, Thorne, Foohey, & Woolhandler, 2019). Grants could also provide stipends for caretakers who are not eligible for Medicaid support. Financial assistance for caretakers will become increasingly vital as the "baby boomer" generation ages and requires more medical care. Additionally, program or City staff administering the grant program could serve as liaisons to connect individuals with existing community health resources. These liaisons could guide applicants through the medical financial assistance process and help them secure ongoing care.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Omaha. Access to affordable healthcare remains a critical issue for many Omaha residents, exacerbating financial hardships and perpetuating cycles of poverty. Building on community input, it is evident that tackling this issue requires a multifaceted strategy. Expanding access to affordable preventative care, enhancing mental health and substance abuse treatment, and supporting community health organizations are essential steps toward improving the health and economic well-being of vulnerable populations. Additionally, caregivers, particularly those without access to Medicaid support, face significant financial challenges that need to be addressed through targeted financial assistance programs.

Housing (LB 840 Section 5(1)(a), 5(1)(e))

A lack of affordable housing is a major determinant of poverty. Nationwide, homelessness increased 18% in 2024, following a 12% increase in 2023. In fact, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development reported that the number of homeless on any given night in 2024 "was the highest ever recorded" (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2024: v). Spending a high proportion of one's income on housing not only reduces available resources of other needs and wants, but also can be detrimental to children's physical, social, emotional, and behavior outcomes, as well as educational achievement (Coley et al. 2013; Galvez & Luna, 2014; Leventhal & Newman, 2010).

Housing is a key to reducing intergenerational poverty and increasing economic mobility. Moreover, research indicates that increased access to affordable housing is perhaps the most cost-effective strategy for reducing childhood poverty and increasing economic mobility in the United States (Chetty et al., 2016). For example, Stanford economist Raj Chetty and colleagues found that children who moved to lower poverty neighborhoods saw their earnings as adults increase by approximately 31%, an increased likelihood of living in better neighborhoods as adults, and a lowered likelihood of becoming a single parent. Also, given the costs of new housing, rehabilitating affordable homes can be one of the most cost-effective methods for maintaining and increasing Omaha's affordable housing inventory, and the City provides a number of services towards this goal (City of Omaha Planning Department, 2023).

National data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, tabulated by the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, provides a visual representation of how housing burden differs by income, race, and home ownership versus renting. In Figure 10, moderately burdened households pay 30%-50% of their household income on housing and severely burdened households pay more than 50% of their income on housing. Homelessness differs by race as well, with Whites in 2020 making up 35% of unhoused families, while representing 75.8% of the U.S. population (for a ratio of 0.46). In comparison, Blacks make up 53% of unhoused families but represent only 13.6% of the population (for a ratio of 3.90; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2024).

FIGURE 10. U.S. HOUSING COST BURDEN BY INCOME, RACE, AND HOME OWNERSHIP (2019-20)
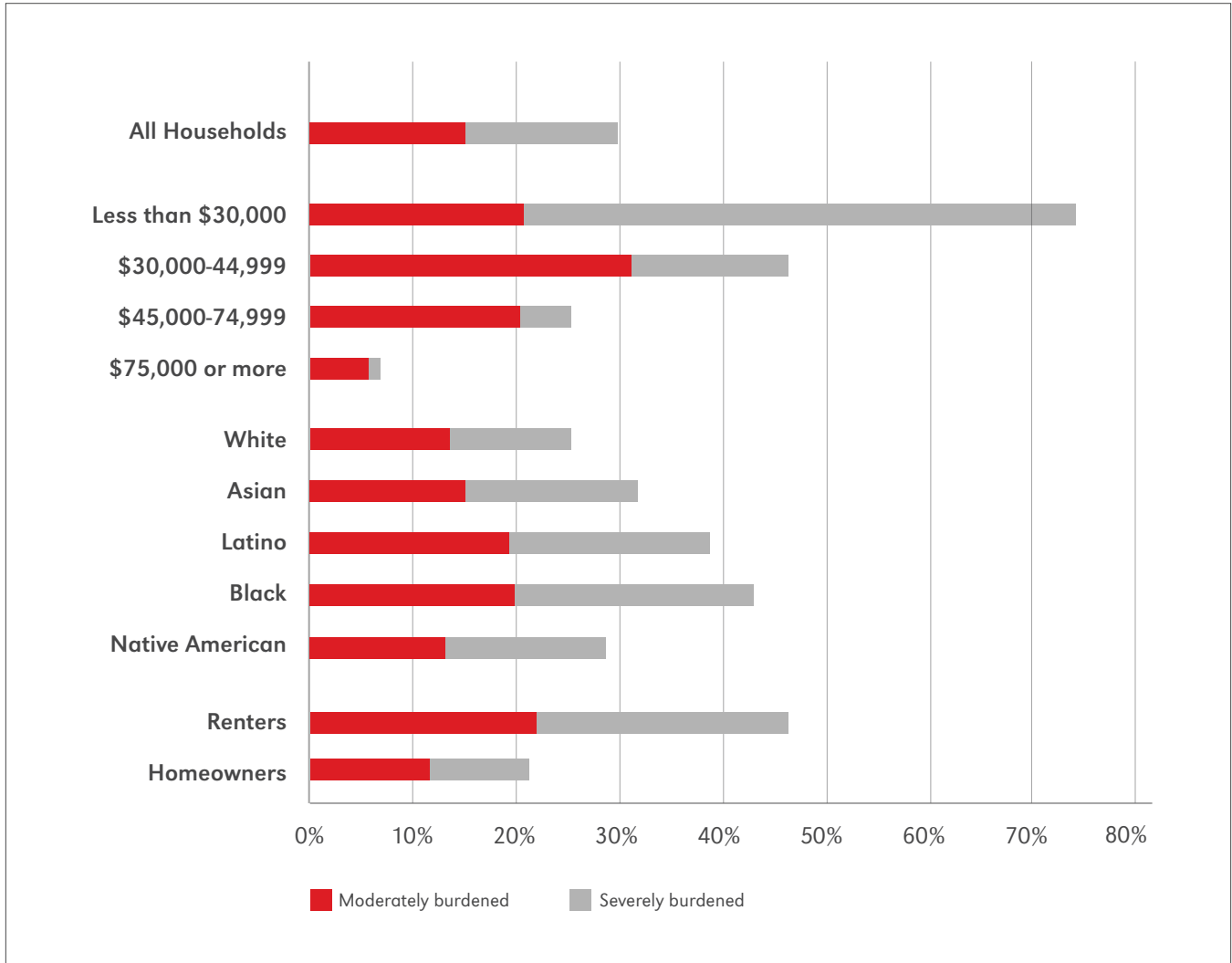
The Housing Element of Omaha's Master Plan acknowledges that one's home and community are fundamental elements of perceptions of quality of life, adopting a vision that, "Omaha must be a community committed to promoting and maintaining a high quality of life for all its people," (Omaha Master Plan, Housing Element, p. 4). One goal for Omaha residents contained in this plan is that Omaha homes and neighborhoods be places to enjoy the benefits of their work, raise their children, and earn a living. The Omaha Housing Affordability Action Plan (HAAP) outlines research and strategies for achieving this vision and goal. Some highlights from this plan include:

- Housing supply:
  - Between 2010 and 2020, Omaha added 26,908 households, while constructing 26,732 units
  - To avoid shortages, slightly more than one unit should be created for every new household
  - Nearly 30,000 housing units are needed in Omaha by 2030 and 60% of those units need to be affordable

- Affordability:
  - Over 46% of Omaha renters are housing cost burdened
  - Renters in eastern Omaha tend to spend more than 30% of their income on housing

- In the previous 10 years, nearly 7,000 affordable housing units in Omaha were lost and the affordability period of 2,000 more units will be lost in the subsequent 8 years
- Over the last 10 years, the cost of a studio apartment (the most affordable option) has increased 44.7% (Turley, 2024). These numbers are adjusted for inflation, meaning that for potential renters to have the same buying-power, this inflation-adjusted increase would be zero.

- Housing age:
    - Nearly 25% of Omaha's residential structures were built before 1950.

See Appendix N for a two-page summary of Omaha's current HAAP accomplishments and objectives.

Beyond housing availability and affordability trends, understanding the cost of housing across different regions provides additional context for evaluating Omaha's housing challenges. Table 16 presents median monthly housing costs for both owner-occupied and renter-occupied units in Omaha, Kansas City, and Des Moines, as well as national figures. Omaha's homeownership costs exceed those of Kansas City, Des Moines, and the national average, making homeownership more expensive in Omaha compared to these regions. On the other hand, while Omaha's rental costs are slightly lower than in Kansas City, they are higher than in Des Moines. When comparing these regional costs to the national averages, Omaha's homeownership costs are notably higher than the U.S. median of $1,331, whereas rental costs are significantly lower than the national median of $1,348. These figures highlight the importance of continued efforts to expand affordable housing options and mitigate cost burdens and underscore the need for localized solutions to address the higher homeownership costs in Omaha, as compared to broader national trends.

Table 16. Median Monthly Housing Cost Across Omaha and Comparable Regions				
Housing Type	Omaha, NE	Kansas City, MO	Des Moines, IA	United States
Owner-Occupied	$1,395	$1,237	$1,228	$1,331
Renter-Occupied	$1,150	$1,186	$1,054	$1,348

U.S. Census Bureau. (2024, December 20). Financial characteristics [American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S2503]. U.S. Department of Commerce.

Finally, data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development indicates that point-in-time counts of homelessness have remained remarkably similar from 2013 (1,476) to 2023 (1,475) (HUD, 2023). This is a promising finding given the affordable housing challenges described above.

Community Perspectives on Housing

Several participants highlighted poverty-related housing needs. The most common issue mentioned was the high cost of rent relative to resident incomes, with seniors on fixed incomes being particularly vulnerable. Additionally, a community organization reported the elderly are adversely impacted by property valuation in Omaha. One participant emphasized the community's need for greater awareness of housing counseling and foreclosure prevention services before crises occur.

Concerns were also raised about the growing unhoused population and the urgent need for adequate shelters. Participants reported that so-called "affordable housing" rentals are often unsafe, and tenants fear that reporting unsafe conditions could lead to eviction, leaving them without a home.

"Hedge funds and investment firms should not be allowed to purchase single-family homes. This would lower home buying prices in affordable neighborhoods and return those homes to the single-buyer market, allowing people to escape the forever-renter money sinkhole."

Survey respondents and community organizations attributed part of the housing crisis to hedge funds and investment firms buying single-family homes and neglecting property maintenance. This prompted both participants and survey respondents to call for initiatives that enable residents to own homes at fair costs, addressing the root causes of housing instability. One community organization also addressed this issue, emphasizing that homeownership is a primary way to build wealth. However, they noted that out-of-town buyers are creating barriers to this wealth-building opportunity.

"Affordable housing" rentals are unsafe, often run by organizations who do not keep up with maintenance. Because tenants cannot afford to live elsewhere, they are forced to choose between homelessness or the negative health effects of continued tenancy. Many tenants are afraid to report these issues for the accurate fear that local government would condemn the structure without rehoming the residents, leading to the homelessness they were trying to avoid.

Furthermore, the code violations reporting form does not allow for anonymous reports. This means tenants reporting issues can be retaliated against for doing so. There are currently NO local government regulations in place to outlaw retaliation for that reason, and it falls outside of EEOC and fair housing protections. The current system is heavily landlord-favorable and tenant-hostile."

Survey respondents provided several suggested solutions to the housing poverty issue including increasing public funding for affordable housing projects, controlling rent increases, penalizing property owners who keep units vacant, changing zoning laws to enable more housing, lowering rent amounts, providing landlord incentives to accept Section 8 vouchers, restricting appraisal practices, implementing rental caps, building more multi-family and tiny home housing, securing funding for code inspectors, enforcing consequences for "slumlords," protecting tenants from retaliation, banning purchases of single-family homes by hedge funds and investment firms, offering housing-related education and resources, and enacting laws to limit corporate ownership of individual housing units.

"Stable housing for seniors. Older adults on fixed incomes can't keep up with rising rents and are subjected to poverty despite contributing their entire lives to the economy."

"Housing is a big one. Last winter we had a homeless encampment in the street opposite my house. It took numerous calls to the mayor's hotline, police, and fire department to get any help."

"Government investment in affordable housing as we can't rely on nonprofits to save everyone."

"Incentivize developers to build and manage affordable/income-based housing and fund community human service agencies to provide housing supportive services."

Table 17. Housing Solutions to Poverty Themes from Community Engagement Events	
North Omaha Themes	South Omaha Themes
Affordable Housing and Housing Access; Employment and Economic Empowerment; Supportive Services and Accessibility; Community and Infrastructure Development	Infrastructure and Urban Development; Environmental and Public Space Enhancement; Economic Investment and Growth

Promising Practices to Consider: Housing

In addition to the numerous important and actionable suggestions provided by participants in our community engagement activities, research from across the nation provides additional information on promising practices to reduce the impact of housing on poverty. A number of these promising practices are outlined in this section.

Housing and Service Interventions for Homeless. A recent experiment on the impact of housing and services interventions for homeless families adopting the methodologically rigorous use of random assignment produced some promising findings. For instance, homeless families receiving long-term subsidies, defined as having priority access to a long-term housing subsidy (typically a Housing Choice Voucher), had less than half the rates of homelessness as compared to families receiving "usual care" or the usual way of serving homeless families. Whereas 34% of the usual care families reported homelessness in the past 6 months after 3-years of follow-up, only 16% of long-term subsidized families reported homeless in the past 6 months over the same 3-year period. Similarly, shelter stays between months 21 and 32 of the study were more than three-times lower for long-term housing subsidy families as compared to usual care, where only 5% of long-term housing subsidy families used a shelter, compared to 19% of families receiving usual care (U.S. Depart. of Housing & Urban Development, 2016). It is extremely difficult to distinguish the unique effect of being unhoused from the general effect of growing up in poverty (Buckner, 2008). However, an experimental policy showed that providing unhoused families permanent housing reduced homelessness, food insecurity, the number of schools that children attended, school absences, and child behavior problems (Gubits et al., 2018).

"Build multi-family housing on empty lots in South and North Omaha, ensure there are grocery stores, daycare and bus lines within walking distance, address the uncontrolled increases in property taxes."

A smaller, but statistically significant finding was found for project-based transitional housing (PBTH) facilities reducing shelter use, where PBTH facilities are defined as priority access to families for a temporary (up to 24-months) service-intensive stay in a project-based transitional housing facility. Shelter utilization was 9% for families receiving PBTH services, compared to 15% of families receiving usual care (U.S. Depart. Of Housing & Urban Development, 2016).

"Secure funding for more code inspectors. Provide education and resources for tenants and landlords regarding their legal rights. Enforce/develop stricter repeat-offender consequences to slumlords, such as suspending or revoking their NE business licenses or similar. Provide code violation property owners with a list of resources to resolve the issue. Assign case managers to follow up with reporting tenants to check for retaliations, repair timelines, harassment, related health concerns, etc."

Tax Increment Financing. Tax increment financing (TIF) is a housing revitalization tool that helps finance the redevelopment costs of specific types of projects within qualifying community redevelopment areas. The TIF program has proven effective in Omaha, frequently by linking TIF to other funding programs that target the creation of affordable housing opportunities (City of Omaha, 2023). In 2021, 601 units of affordable housing were TIF-approved projects and in 2022, 119 units of affordable housing were TIF-approved projects (City of Omaha, 2023).

Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) encourage private capital investment in rental housing by providing a tax credit towards the investor's federal income taxes. In Nebraska, LIHTC are managed at the state-level. They are frequently used in coordination with TIF to create affordable housing units. Of the 720 affordable housing units linked to TIF in 2021-22, 80% of those units were also funded by LIHTC (City of Omaha, 2023). Of note regarding LIHTC, the tax credit is increased as the number of low-income units produced. Moreover, developments can include new construction, as well as substantial renovation (City of Omaha, 2023).

Supportive Housing. Housing First and other supportive housing models have been found to be effective and cost-effective in promoting housing stability in targeted populations. For example, a study of homeless people with serious mental illness in New York City found that supportive housing reduced the costs of homeless shelters, state mental hospitals, and prisons and jails. Overall, placement in supportive housing was associated with a reduction in services use of $16,282 per housing unit per year (Culhane, Metraux, & Hadley, 2002). Adjusting for inflation, this would be closer to $27,000 in 2024 dollars.

Land Banks. "Land banks" (also known as "community land trusts") are another promising practice that have been adopted by a number of cities. Although rules and processes vary, they are generally public authorities or non-profit organizations that acquire and manage properties with the intent to return them to productive use to meet community needs, such as affordable housing. Some primary roles of land banks include: 1) acquiring parcels of tax-delinquent or abandoned properties for redevelopment, 2) acquiring and managing properties until a community can develop them for affordable housing, and 3) acquiring properties to convert to parks, retail areas, flood mitigation, etc. (Local Housing Solutions, 2021). Evidence suggests that land banks should not be used in isolation, however. Rather characteristics of successful land banks include: 1) being closely linked to tax collection and foreclosure processes, 2) coordinating with local land use goals and community needs, 3) building trust through transparency and accountability, and 4) aligning their policies and actions with other tools and programs providing affordable housing (Heins & Abdelazim, 2014). Omaha Municipal Land Bank (OMLB) is a non-profit that fills this role locally. The OMLB acquired 17 properties in 2023, owned over 375 properties, and sold 164 (Omaha Land Bank, 2024).

Accessory Dwelling Units. ADUs are smaller, independent units that can be attached to, inside, or detached from an existing home. Generally, they can be built in basements, over garages, or as detached units in the backyard, and can be used as rental properties or for family members. Recent research has examined the potential

role of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in addressing housing affordability and homelessness, though direct causal studies remain limited. Studies have found that ADU liberalization can meaningfully increase housing supply, particularly in high-cost areas. Chapple et al. (2020) analyzed ADU production in California following state-level reforms, finding that ADU completions more than tripled in the year following policy changes that reduced barriers to ADU construction. While this expanded housing stock, the direct impact on homelessness was not measured.

An analysis by Wegmann and Chapple (2014) of ADU potential in the San Francisco Bay Area estimated that ADUs could significantly increase housing stock in many neighborhoods. Their research suggested ADUs often rent for below-market rates, potentially creating naturally occurring affordable housing options.

In 2024, the City of Omaha amended ordinances to expand options for ADUs in city limits, stating that ADUs are a great housing option because they:

- Create new housing units while respecting the look and scale of single-family developments.

- Support efficient use of existing housing stock and infrastructure.

- Provide housing that responds to changing family needs, smaller households, and increasing housing costs.

- Provide accessible housing for seniors and persons with disabilities.

- Offer environmentally friendly housing choices with less average space per person and smaller associated carbon footprints.

The City of Omaha Comprehensive Plan will update zoning consistent with the Omaha HAAP, which recommends modification of Zoning Ordinances to provide additional residential use types, including: triplexes, quadplexes, and smaller scale multifamily.

Limited Equity Housing Cooperatives. An example of a promising practice that is common in some European countries is limited equity housing Cooperatives (LECs). In general, this refers to communal housing situations with open membership, democratic member control, limitations on share prices, and collective ownership of the entire building, rather than each member owning a single apartment. In some ways, LECs are similar to land banks, but in a fashion restricted to a single building. A review of the research on LECs indicates that they can provide high-quality, safe, affordable housing for low-income families, while contributing to stable, economically diverse neighborhoods (Saegert & Bentiez, 2005).

Tenant/Home-Owner Education. Tenant and home-owner education programs can also prevent homelessness, prevent eviction, increase home ownership, and increase wealth development. Family Housing Advisory Services, Inc. provide workshops on homeownership, including pre-purchase, financial education, and post-purchase education. In addition, Housing Matters and RentWise workshops educate participants in tenancy obligations and rights, as well as housing affordability. Similarly, Legal Aid of Nebraska provides a Landlord and Tenant Handbook to educate citizens regarding the landlord and tenant law and their associated rights.

Tenant Legal Protections. Tenant protections, which include policies and programs designed to ensure renters have access to safe and habitable living conditions, fair treatment from landlords, and protection against unnecessary evictions, can also reduce the risk of eviction and housing instability. Such protections have a larger impact on poverty reduction by creating a stable foundation for families and children to thrive. To protect children in particular, Tulsa has developed a "student eviction alert" system to assist youth and their academic success. An eviction data working group of cross-sector partners connects the school system to community partners working towards housing stability (ImpactTulsa, 2022). Similarly, Kansas City, MO, has implemented the following programs: 1) KC Tenants, a tenant union, 2) Healthy Homes Rental Inspection Program, 3) a Tenant Bill of Rights, and 4) a City Office of Tenant Advocacy, which provides resources and supports to people facing housing issues (Urban Institute, 2025). The Nebraska Legislature is considering a number of bills in the 2025 session that address tenant legal protections. For example, LB 92[6], a bill introduced by Senator Terrell McKinney, would adopt the

Residential Tenant Clean Slate Act, with the intent to help remove stigma of tenants' past evictions under certain conditions, aiding them in securing housing and other opportunities without the burden of eviction history. Another proposed bill, LB 223[7], introduced by Senator Dunixi Guereca, aims to eliminate housing discrimination based on lawful sources of income which includes income from social security, child support, foster care subsidies, alimony, veterans benefits, or any other form of federal, state, or local public general assistance or housing assistance. Overall, the goal of these programs is to create stable, more equitable communities where families can thrive, and they represent promising practices as partial remedies for addressing a lack of stable, safe, affordable housing options.

Transit-Oriented Development. Finally, refer to "transit-oriented development" as outlined in the previous section on Economic Development and Employment. Under this model, affordable housing, as well as other development, is aligned to public transportation to provide access to essential services without requiring a dependency on private automobile ownership.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Omaha. To address Omaha's affordable housing challenges, the City will need to implement a multi-faceted approach that combines both new development and preservation strategies. This includes expanding housing subsidies for the homeless population while strengthening tenant legal protections through local and state-level reforms. Strategic use of Tax Increment Financing can create affordable housing opportunities while improving transportation, employment access, and essential services. The City should continue to update zoning consistent with the HAAP, which recommends modification of Zoning Ordinance to provide additional residential use types, triplexes, quadplexes, and smaller scale multifamily. The City should strengthen its partnership with the Omaha Municipal Land Bank and continue promoting accessory dwelling unit ordinances to increase housing inventory. Private investment in affordable rental housing can be stimulated through coordination with investors utilizing low-income housing tax credits. Additionally, the City will need to focus on expanding permanent supportive housing units while increasing efforts to rehabilitate existing affordable housing—a cost-effective alternative to new construction that helps maintain the current housing inventory. Moreover, Omaha's support of pathways to home ownership such as financial planning and preparation, pre-home purchase education and post purchase education, will round out the solutions.

Transportation and Infrastructure (LB 840 Section 5(1)(a), 5(1)(h))

Transportation is an essential link between citizens' homes and access to employment, education, social services, groceries, medical care, and other essential services, as well as entertainment, shopping, and other economic drivers. A 2022 study found that, nationwide, 5.7% of adults lacked reliable transportation for daily living in the past 12 months, and this rate was higher for women than for men (Ng et al., 2024). This study also found that higher levels of education and family income were related to more reliable transportation options, whereas racial and ethnic minorities were more likely to lack reliable transportation. The Center for Population Health makes clear the importance of reliable transportation for so many other aspects of our lives in stating, that "transportation as a Social Determinant of Health affects nearly every other Social Determinant of Health because it hinders access to needed services, whether it be a doctor's appointment, trip to the grocery store, and many other places," (Center for Population Health, 2022). Transportation is a particularly salient issue for poverty, moreover, as it directly impacts access to poverty-alleviating mechanisms such as education and employment opportunities. The relationship goes both ways, however, as individuals with less than a high school diploma are nearly three times as likely to lack reliable transportation as persons with a college degree or more education (3.8% compared to 9.7%, Ng et al., 2024). Poor minorities are least likely to have access to private transportation (Edwards, Crain, & Kalleberg, 2007).

Both nationwide (Sen, 2022) and in Omaha, American citizens tend to be heavily dependent upon automobile transportation. The National Center for Health Statistics reports that adults living in the West North Central

region of the U.S., encompassing Nebraska, were the most likely to have been without reliable transportation for daily living, at 7.5% (Ng et al., 2024). The Transportation Element of Omaha's Master Plan acknowledges that the city's transportation system is currently dominated by the need to accommodate automobiles (Omaha Master Plan, Transportation Element). According to the U.S Census American Community Survey, in 2019, only 1.3% of workers in Omaha commuted via public transit (Burrow, Burd, & McKenzie, 2021). Although proposed transportation improvements in the city have traditionally focused on streets and roadways, recent efforts have promoted greater alignment between new developments and public transportation access.

In many metropolitan areas, higher educated and higher income residents have better access to public transportation, as well as greater resources to purchase private vehicles (Urban Institute, 2020). Transportation is particularly a struggle for late-shift workers. Research indicates that 17% of America's metropolitan workforce works the late-shift, and the late-shift is a key source of employment for working-class Americans who lack higher degrees (American Public Transportation Association, 2019). Research conducted by UNO's Nebraska Center for Justice Research suggests that this is of great concern for a population that consistently struggles with the issue of poverty: individuals reentering our communities from correctional facilities. Because of seniority policies of many labor unions, entry level workers must begin as second-shift workers, but Omaha's public transportation options are not available to second-shift employees, denying union-based opportunities for large portions of reentering persons (Towne et al., 2023).

The Transportation Element of Omaha's Master Plan describes the basic elements of public transit in Omaha. The Omaha Metro Transit provides scheduled, fixed-route bus transit within the Omaha city limits and limited contracted services to the suburbs of Bellevue, Ralston, La Vista, Papillion, and Council Bluffs. (Omaha Master Plan, Transportation Element). Metro serves a territory of approximately 100 square miles. Metro's fleet is 100 percent ADA accessible. It provides service primarily to and from downtown, with higher frequencies along major transportation corridors.

In November 2020, Metro added a rapid transit service on 8.2 miles of Dodge Street, known as ORBT (Omaha Rapid Bus Transit). The system uses 60-foot buses powered by compressed natural gas. ORBT has 23 stops that are further apart than most Metro Transit bus routes. Each station includes a fully covered platform, a ticketing kiosk, arrival signage, free WiFi, and bike racks. After four years of service, ORBT celebrated two million rides on November 18, 2024 (Metro Transit, 2024). Metro ridership increased by 18,000 passengers from 2023 to 2024, and much of this increase is attributed to ORBT (Omaha World-Herald, 2025).

A number of project evaluation criteria metrics in the Transportation Element of the Master Plan are important for poverty reduction. These include the following:

- Metric 2.2: Walking and Biking Accessibility
    - A measure of the project's ability to improve access to parks, schools, and other community facilities.

- Metric 2.3: Access to Healthy Food Sources
    - This metric considered access to full-service grocery stores, community gardens and farmers markets as a source of fresh food that contributes to a balanced, healthy diet.

- Metric 4.2: Economic Development
    - This metric was based on a qualitative assessment of if the project supports or impedes economic development opportunities.

- Metric 4.4: Concurrency with Committed Public Services
    - Whether or not a project is consistent with areas of committed public services, especially physical infrastructure-based services such as water and central sewer systems.

This section examines transportation and infrastructure's impact on poverty alleviation in Omaha, Nebraska, and compares it to national trends, offering insights for developing a Poverty Elimination Action Plan for the City. Tables 18 and 19 reveal significant transportation patterns that highlight disparities in access and commuting experiences. In Omaha, 73.6% of workers commute by car, truck, or van, with only 1.1% using public transit, much lower than the national average of 3.4%. These figures suggest a high reliance on automobiles, which aligns with the City's Master Plan's focus on automotive infrastructure. However, this reliance can exacerbate poverty, especially for individuals without access to reliable transportation, such as low-income workers, minorities, and those recently reentering society. Furthermore, Omaha's average commute time of 19.6 minutes is shorter than the national average of 26.6 minutes, which may signal more localized commuting challenges for underserved communities.

Table 18. Means of Transportation to Work by Vehicles Across Omaha and Comparable Regions				
	Omaha, NE	Kansas City, MO	Des Moines, IA	United States
Car, truck or van: drove alone	73.6%	72.8%	72.6%	70.6%
Car, truck, or van: carpooled	8.7%	7.4%	11.3%	8.5%
Public transportation (excluding taxi-cab)	1.1%	1.9%	1.1%	3.4%
Walked	1.5%	1.4%	1.9%	2.0%
Taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle, or other means	1.5%	1.7%	1.7%	1.9%
Worked from Home	13.6%	14.8%	11.4%	13.4%

U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). Means of transportation to work by vehicles available (Table B08141). American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables. U.S. Department of Commerce.

Table 19. Commuting Time Across Omaha and Comparable Regions				
Travel Time	Omaha, NE	Kansas City, MO	Des Moines, IA	United States
Less than 10 minutes	14.6%	11.7%	14.1%	12.6%
10 to 14 minutes	18.5%	14.9%	19.0%	13.3%
15 to 19 minutes	22.8%	20.1%	24.0%	15.3%
20 to 24 minutes	18.5%	19.7%	18.3%	14.3%
25 to 29 minutes	7.9%	8.5%	7.4%	6.8%
30 to 34 minutes	10.1%	13.3%	9.6%	13.7%
35 to 44 minutes	2.3%	4.9%	2.3%	7.1%
45 to 59 minutes	2.3%	3.5%	2.0%	8.1%
60 or more minutes	3.0%	3.3%	3.3%	8.7%
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	19.6	21.9	19.6	26.6%

U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). Commuting characteristics by sex (ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S0801). U.S. Department of Commerce.

Survey respondents highlighted key issues related to the lack of accessible and effective public transportation in Omaha, particularly in the western parts of the city where many jobs are located. This has contributed to segregation, as buses are unable to reach these areas due to the absence of mandated pedestrian infrastructure in new developments. Respondents noted that they are spending hours commuting to work or accessing essential services, with the risk of losing their employment if buses are late.

"Public transportation is not funded the way it needs to be. People are suffering as a result. And Omaha remains segregated because buses only go where developers have allowed them to go (i.e., developers are refusing to build sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure and can legally do so. This has allowed virtually no buses from being able to access West Omaha). Laws need to be enacted that force developers to include pedestrian infrastructure in their developments."

Proposed solutions include expanding bus routes and frequencies, investing in local transportation providers, and enacting laws that require developers to include pedestrian infrastructure in their projects. Improving public transportation was seen as essential for boosting economic mobility, self-sufficiency, and the overall economic health of the community. Concerns were also raised about the poor condition of the roads, especially in North Omaha. Overall, respondents stressed the need for adequate funding from the City and state to address these pressing transportation challenges.

"Adequate transportation - more bus stops & more frequency for buses."

"Routes of transportation that connect people from where they live to their destinations (without spending so much time connecting routes)."

"Transportation. There seems to be no effective work toward expanding accessible transportation to west Omaha where a great percentage of jobs are, especially entry level roles that pay well (think Amazon, Streck, Papillion Foods, etc.)"

"Invest in local transportation companies that provide car and vanpool services for employee transportation."

"The City and state need to fund public transportation adequately."

"Bus routes from certain areas that go to specific places. Example: a bus that takes residents from Bellevue to a couple places downtown and returns at night. Or a bus from La Vista that takes people to manufacturing plants."

Table 19. Transportation Solutions to Poverty Themes from Community Engagement Events	
North Omaha Themes	South Omaha Themes
Improved Transportation Access; Accessible and Affordable Transit; Sustainable Transit Infrastructure	Public Transportation and Accessibility; Expansion and Service Enhancement; Reframing the Narrative Around Public Transit; Investment in Transportation Infrastructure

Promising Practices to Consider: Transportation and Infrastructure

In addition to the numerous important and actionable suggestions provided by participants in our community engagement activities, existing research provides additional information on promising practices on the impact of improving transportation options to alleviate poverty.

Microtransit. For example, microtransit represents an emerging transportation model that combines traditional public transit with modern on-demand services. According to the Federal Transit Administration, microtransit is a technology-enabled service that links traditional bus or train systems to on-demand, smaller, more efficient modes of transportation in designated services areas (Transit Cooperative Research Program, 2016). The goal is to expand the current reach of less flexible public transportation options in a coordinated fashion, using modes of transportation that are more flexible and more efficient than adding to existing bus lines or train service. For example, Omaha's Refugee Housing Planning Study, a coordinated effort in 2023 by Restoring Dignity, Front Porch Investments, and Wilder Research, describes barriers to the use of public transportation in the form of long bus wait times and families feeling that they have to live in dangerous neighborhoods to have access to public transit (Restoring Dignity, 2024). Microtransit has the potential to at least partially alleviate both of these concerns. Moreover, microtransit shows promise to significantly increase accessibility to jobs, healthcare, education, and other vital services for individuals in underserved areas. By connecting people to employment centers, job training programs, and economic opportunities, microtransit can help reduce poverty and improve economic mobility (Jiang, 2022). Microtransit can offer a more affordable alternative to car ownership or expensive ride-hailing

services, potentially reducing transportation expenses and freeing up income for other essential needs (Center for Transit-Oriented Development, 2014). In January 2025, Metro held public comment meetings to elicit feedback on a new microtransit pilot program that has backing from local private funders (Metro Transit, 2025). This potential microtransit program holds promise for extending the reach of the current Metro transit system in an efficient manner, while reducing barriers to access for new and existing riders.

Innovative Mobility Solutions/Spatial Connectivity Strategies. Innovative mobility solutions and spatial connectivity strategies, such as Metro's ORBT (described above), show promise in providing safe, efficient, and speedier public transit by incorporating smart technology and streamlining travel through practices such as integrating traffic signal technology, as outlined on Metro's official program page[8]. Whereas microtransit expands transit options to geographic areas of the city with less density in ridership potential, ORBT focuses on increasing capacity, speed, and efficiency in high density areas of Omaha. Given their complementary roles and goals, microtransit and ORBT exhibit promise to greatly increase both the depth and breadth of public transit access for Omaha's most underserved populations.

Free Student Transit. Another innovative practice is the provision of free transit rides to K-12 students, which was first implemented on May 10, 2021 through Metro's K-12 Free Student Transit program,[9] free "Pass to Class"[10] transit ridership for MCC students, free "MavRIDE"[11] bus pass program for UNO students and employees, and Creighton's "Jaypass"[12] that provides free transit to students, staff, and faculty. These programs not only provide economical and sustainable transportation options, particularly to economically challenged students (and staff!), but they also introduce the utility and convenience of public transit to a new generation of young Omaha citizens.

State Funding Support. Research published in 2025 by the Omaha World-Herald on 2019 data (to remove the impact of pandemic effects) indicates that per capita tax support for public transit in Omaha is 90% less than cities like Denver (Omaha World-Herald, 2025). Average state and local public support for transit across the twenty cities was $77 per capita. In Omaha, per capita support is only $23, or 70% below average. Increased tax support is strongly linked to ridership in their data, and cities that received significant state support have the heaviest ridership. In recent years, however, Omaha receives little or no state support for public transit.

Transit-Oriented Development. Finally, refer to "transit-oriented development" as outlined in the previous section on Economic Development and Employment. Under this model, access to public transportation guides the orientation of new developments in affordable housing, as well as other essential services, without requiring a dependency on private automobile ownership.

Conclusion and Recommendations. Improving Omaha's public transportation system requires a comprehensive strategy that begins with evaluating and supporting the microtransit pilot program for potential permanent implementation. The City should work with the State Legislature to secure increased funding for public transit, complementing local investments. Future development should focus on transit-oriented planning that aligns affordable housing and essential services with existing and planned transportation routes. Omaha would benefit if Metro Transit utilizes data and research to enhance the ORBT service on Dodge Street while exploring potential north/south route expansion. To cultivate the next generation of transit users, Metro should actively promote and market free transit access for K-12 and higher education students. Throughout these initiatives, it's crucial to maintain ongoing community engagement and utilize data-driven decision-making, particularly when evaluating new transit opportunities such as the microtransit pilot, ORBT, and the proposed streetcar system.

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8. https://www.ometro.com/rider-guide/orbt/
9. https://www.ometro.com/k-12/
10. https://www.mccneb.edu/Student-Resources/Pass-to-Class
11. https://www.unomaha.edu/business-and-finance/support-services/parking-services/alternative-transportation.php
12. https://www.creighton.edu/public-safety/parking-transportation/public-transportation

Additional Community Concerns (LB 840 Section 5(1)(a), 5(1)(i)-(j))

As a guide to the organization of our report, LB 840 provided a variety of domains for our research and community engagement in order to determine causes and potential solutions for addressing poverty in Omaha communities. However, a number of important concerns expressed by community members during our engagement events do not fit cleanly into one of the above categories. We believe that many of them deserve mention, however, so we include these additional concerns and recommendations under this "generic" category of Additional Community Concerns.

For example, food insecurity and family support are key concerns. Table 20 shows that Omaha's SNAP participation rate is slightly lower than the national average but comparable to Kansas City, which may indicate barriers to access rather than a lower level of need. Table 21 highlights the distribution of households with children by age group, revealing that Omaha has a higher proportion of households with children than the national average. These data provide important context for community concerns related to food assistance and family services.

Table 20. Food Stamps/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Participation Across Omaha and Comparable Regions				
	Omaha, NE	Kansas City, MO	Des Moines, IA	United States
Households receiving food stamps/SNAP	10.2%	10.5%	16.2%	11.8%
Households not receiving food stamps/SNAP	89.8%	89.5%	83.8%	88.2%

U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). Food Stamps/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (Table S2201). American Community Survey, ACS 5-year estimates subject tables. U.S. Department of Commerce.

Table 21. Households with Children Under 18 by Age Group in Omaha and Comparable Regions				
	Omaha, NE	Kansas City, MO	Des Moines, IA	United States
Under 6 years only	21.4%	23.8%	20.7%	21.2%
Under 6 years and 6 to 17 years	21.5%	21.4%	25.9%	19.7%
6 to 17 years only	57.1%	54.9%	53.4%	59.1%

U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). Households and families (Table S1101). American Community Survey, ACS 5-year estimates subject tables. U.S. Department of Commerce.

"Childcare, there are jobs, some better paid than others, but there is not much flexibility in hours. Taking children to daycare is expensive, we need high quality daycare at an affordable price."

Community Perspectives on Additional Community Concerns

Community survey respondents highlighted several key issues facing the city, including the need for affordable childcare and after-school programs, language barriers that hinder access to services for minority groups, and the unequal distribution of City funds, which community members report tend to favor tourist areas over underserved neighborhoods. Many respondents also reported concerns about the lack of food security. Respondents also brought up several key crime-related issues in the community, including homelessness, drug use and sales, sex trafficking, and violence, particularly against women. Community organizations also stated that the cost of utilities and insurance is particularly high in North Omaha, a financial burden to residents residing there.

Survey participants highlighted the need to address the "cliff effect" on public assistance programs, where even a small increase in income can result in a substantial loss of benefits, discouraging individuals from pursuing higher-paying jobs. To mitigate this issue, respondents suggested implementing a tiered reduction in economic assistance, increasing investment in affordable housing, and providing targeted services for groups facing unique barriers, such as non-English speakers and formerly incarcerated individuals.

Beyond economic stability, community members also emphasized the importance of greater engagement and improved coordination between government agencies and nonprofits. They called for increased investment in initiatives supporting parents, single parents, and childcare workers to strengthen family stability and economic mobility.

Concerns about community safety were another key theme, particularly regarding opportunities for youth engagement. Respondents advocated the development of parks, playgrounds, and community centers that offer recreational, educational, and cultural activities. Additional recommendations included expanding rehabilitation programs, implementing community policing strategies, and adopting violence prevention initiatives. While most respondents supported preventative and community-based solutions, one individual expressed the need for more punitive measures.

Overall, the feedback underscored the multifaceted nature of poverty and the necessity of a comprehensive, community-driven approach to tackling the structural and social challenges faced by the city's most vulnerable populations.

> *"Language barrier, I noticed people don't help the most groups because of the language barrier. I have witnessed organizations put the same efforts to help other minorities because of language barriers and bias."*

> *"City funds are concentrated on further developing the touristic downtown area and West Omaha areas. There needs to be significant investment in other areas of the city, specifically North Omaha."*

> *"The crime problems. Yes, statistically the crime rates have gone down over the years, but it is still AN ISSUE. I see drug addicts roaming the city, some needing help. But others cause increased negative living experience as some cause public disturbances and commit crimes against people. Additionally, other crimes such as violence against women and theft."*

"I don't pretend to know, but good jobs for parents, support for single parents, free childcare, and free pre-school would probably help."

"Community Policing, violent prevention programs. Developing community centers to offer cultural, recreational and educational activities."

Community organizations also had recommendations for additional community concerns. First, the need for strong collaboration and partnership is emphasized, with organizations like Threshold, Project Harmony, and UNO DASH expressing interest in working together to avoid duplication of efforts and pilot new programs. Second, a holistic, multi-faceted approach is seen as crucial, addressing not just basic needs but also providing access to high-paying jobs, reliable transportation, and affordable childcare. This includes providing opportunities for high-paying jobs, such as in the tech industry, as well as addressing challenges with reliable transportation and access to childcare. Third, respondents highlighted the importance of inclusion and representation of marginalized voices, such as parents, youth, and communities of color, as essential to shaping the plan in a meaningful way. Fourth, systemic change is desired, with calls for government commitment to financial education and empowerment, as well as policy interventions to address climate change impacts on low-income populations. Fifth, the responses highlight the importance of addressing basic needs, such as food access, in Omaha's Poverty Elimination Plan. The respondent from the Food Bank emphasizes the need to include the Food Bank in this effort and to have conversations about equity in food distribution by pantries, as the amount of food provided by each pantry varies widely across the city. Access to basic needs like food, utilities, and housing is a major concern, with the need to ensure equity in food distribution and address barriers to home ownership. Finally, essential services were also highlighted, including the need to prioritize quality childcare, cost of utilities and insurance. Overall, the responses demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the complex, interconnected challenges of poverty and the importance of adopting a comprehensive, community-driven approach to Omaha's Poverty Elimination Plan.

"The city must consider free pre-school childcare as we are seeing in cities like New York, as well as free afterschool programs that allow young folk to be cared for and cherished with real activities that keep their minds and bodies healthy and safe."

"It comes down to money. There are more agencies doing the work to reduce the causes and impacts of poverty than most communities similar in size have. There is more money given by foundations than most communities also. The missing piece is local government and business investment–significant and long-term–in this work and coordination with the system of nonprofits "on the ground" doing the work."

"Tiered reduction in economic assistance as financial milestones are achieved, rather than a sharp or complete cut-off of resources before the gain of such miles is matured."

Table 22. Additional Concerns Solutions to Poverty Themes from Community Engagement Events	
North Omaha Themes	South Omaha Themes
Increased Government Support & Funding; Government Transparency & Accountability; Political Will & Advocacy; Community-Centered Leadership & Decision-Making; Inclusive & Holistic Approaches; Civic Engagement & Political Participation; Community Building; Affordable Safe Housing; Outreach and Engagement	Laws and Legal Framework; Program Accessibility and Support; Cultural Competence and Inclusivity; Community Engagement and Support; Transparency, Accountability, and Trust; Holistic and Sustainable Approaches; Focus on Solutions and Political Change; Support Systems and Resources; Safety and Security; Infrastructure for Safety and Well-being; Crisis and Community Support

Promising Practices to Consider: Additional Community Concerns

While education, employment, healthcare, housing, and transportation are critical pillars in the fight against poverty, additional strategies can further enhance financial stability and well-being for low-income residents. This section highlights three promising strategies—direct cash transfers, paid leave policies, and local Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) programs—that have demonstrated success in improving financial stability and lifting families out of poverty. Implementing these policies in Omaha could provide direct relief to vulnerable populations while fostering long-term resilience.

Cash Transfer Program, A Direct Pathway to Poverty Reduction. Direct cash transfer programs have gained recognition as an effective way to reduce economic hardship by allowing recipients to address their most pressing needs. Unlike in-kind benefits, which often limit assistance to specific goods or services, cash transfers give individuals the autonomy to allocate funds toward rent, food, childcare, transportation, and education. Research has shown that these programs not only alleviate immediate financial stress but also provide opportunities for long-term financial security.

For example, the Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration (SEED) in Stockton, California, provided $500 monthly stipends to 125 residents over two years. Results indicated that recipients experienced greater job stability, reduced income volatility, and improved mental health (SEED, 2021). Similarly, the Magnolia Mother's Trust in Jackson, Mississippi, which provides $1,000 monthly payments to Black mothers in public housing, has led to significant improvements in financial security, debt reduction, and access to education (Springboard to Opportunities, 2021).

Other cities have also seen positive outcomes from guaranteed income programs. San Antonio's initiative provided families with an initial $1,908 payment followed by quarterly $400 payments, allowing recipients to cover basic needs while also saving, paying off debt, and investing in career advancement (Dimmick, 2022). These examples demonstrate that direct cash assistance is not only effective in providing immediate relief but also supports long-term financial stability, reducing the likelihood that families will need further government assistance.

Additionally, international and national research supports the efficacy of cash transfers. The MOMentum program in Marin County, California, which provides $1,000 monthly to low-income mothers of color, has shown improvements in food security, housing stability, and overall well-being (Business Insider, 2024). A comprehensive review by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) further confirms that cash transfers improve economic stability, enhance access to healthcare and education, and reduce financial volatility among low-income households (ODI, 2023).

For Omaha, a localized cash transfer program could be a valuable tool in combating poverty. A targeted initiative for low-income families, particularly in historically underserved communities, could provide immediate relief while fostering long-term financial security. Partnering with philanthropic organizations, leveraging municipal funding, or engaging local businesses as financial contributors could ensure a sustainable implementation model.

Paid Leave Policies, Strengthening Financial Security for Low-Income Workers. Paid leave is a critical tool for poverty alleviation, ensuring that workers do not have to sacrifice their income when dealing with illness, childbirth, or caregiving responsibilities. Without paid leave, many low-income workers are forced to choose between earning a paycheck and addressing urgent personal or family needs, leading to financial instability, job loss, and long-term economic hardship.

In Nebraska, the Healthy Families and Workplaces Act will take effect in October 2025, providing workers with the ability to accrue one hour of paid leave for every 30 hours worked, up to 40 hours per year for small employers and 56 hours per year for larger businesses. This initiative represents a significant step forward in providing basic paid leave protections for Nebraska workers. However, while this policy helps, more could be done to address the needs of low-income workers, particularly those with caregiving responsibilities or chronic health conditions that require extended time off.

Other cities have recognized the limitations of minimal paid leave policies and have implemented more comprehensive programs. For example, San Francisco's Paid Parental Leave Ordinance ensures workers receive fully paid leave for bonding with a new child, which has been shown to improve family financial security and workforce retention (Milkman & Appelbaum, 2013). Similarly, New Jersey's paid leave program provides financial support for employees who take time off to care for a newborn or a seriously ill family member, reducing income volatility and improving long-term stability (Rossin-Slater, 2017).

To maximize the impact of Nebraska's new paid leave law, Omaha can explore additional policies to strengthen support for workers and ensure paid leave serves as a meaningful tool for poverty alleviation. This could include:

- **Expanding Paid Leave Duration:** Increasing the amount of leave available to low-income workers beyond the current maximum of 40–56 hours, which is often insufficient for significant medical or caregiving needs.

- **Supplementing Wages During Extended Leave:** Creating a city-supported paid leave fund for low-wage workers who need more than a few days off, ensuring that taking leave does not push them deeper into financial insecurity.

- **Encouraging Employer Participation:** Offering tax credits or financial incentives for businesses—particularly small businesses—that provide more generous paid leave benefits.

- **Ensuring Equitable Access:** Conducting public awareness campaigns so that workers, particularly those in low-wage industries, understand their rights and can take full advantage of available benefits.

By building upon Nebraska's Healthy Families and Workplaces Act, Omaha has an opportunity to maximize the potential of paid leave as a poverty alleviation tool. Ensuring that workers can take necessary time off without

facing financial hardship will contribute to greater economic stability for low-income families and reduce the risk of job loss due to unforeseen life events.

Local Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Programs, Supporting Low-Income Workers. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is widely recognized as one of the most effective anti-poverty tools in the U.S. While federal and state-level EITC programs provide financial relief to low-income workers, local EITC initiatives offer additional support that can help families meet basic needs and reduce economic hardship.

Several cities, including New York and Chicago, have implemented local EITC programs to supplement state and federal benefits. Research shows that EITC payments help families afford necessities such as housing, food, and childcare while also reducing reliance on emergency assistance programs (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2022). Additionally, because the EITC is structured to encourage workforce participation, it serves as an incentive for individuals to seek and maintain employment.

For Omaha, a local Earned Income Tax Credit could provide significant relief to low-income workers struggling to make ends meet. By offering an additional tax credit at the city or county level, Omaha could help residents increase their disposable income, reduce financial stress, and prevent families from falling deeper into poverty. A municipal EITC program could also be tailored to prioritize workers in industries facing labor shortages, helping both employees and local businesses by stabilizing the workforce. Moreover, the municipal program could explore the benefits of EITC for Individualized Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) taxpayers.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Omaha. In addressing these concerns that fell outside of the domains outlined in LB 804 for eliminating poverty, the City could implement several targeted economic support programs. A guaranteed income initiative, modeled after successful programs in other cities, should focus on demographic groups most affected by poverty. The City's expansion of paid leave benefits for low-income workers beyond the current 40-56 hour maximum would better accommodate significant medical and caregiving needs. Supporting working families through a local Earned Income Tax Credit program providing a 5% match to federal EITC recipients, along with expanding access to free or subsidized childcare and pre-school programs, would enable greater workforce participation. These efforts require improved coordination between government agencies, non-profits, and private sector partners.

Poverty Need Prioritization LB 840, section 4(1)

Ideally, all the strategies and recommendations presented above would be implemented swiftly. However, it may be advantageous for those responsible for program implementation to adopt a staggered approach, focusing on the most urgent needs sequentially. This section aims to guide that prioritization process.

The present needs assessment examined poverty alleviation efforts and identified key areas of focus. According to the survey:

• Local organizations most frequently target needs related to education, employment, and health.

• The City of Omaha prioritizes housing, employment, and health.

While these efforts benefit thousands of residents, additional needs remain unmet. Feedback from Omaha organizations identified housing, health, transportation, and others as critical areas of concern. These needs were echoed by community members participating in the poverty elimination action plan events, who identified housing, education, and other needs as priorities. Similarly, housing, employment, and education emerged as the top needs reported by community survey respondents, who represented the largest source of data for this assessment.

To identify outstanding needs, we integrated the top priorities addressed by City initiatives and local organizations with the needs reported by the community. Table 23 summarizes these findings and highlights areas that require greater attention due to their frequent mention by community members or the scale of unmet demand. The most pressing outstanding needs are housing and others, followed by education and transportation.

Table 23. Needs Assessment Analysis Summary Table[1]		
Most Common Intervention Targets	Top Needs Reported	Unmet Needs (Gap Analysis)
Education[1] Employment[2] Health[2] Housing[1]	Education[2] Employment[1] Health[1] Housing[3] Others[2] Transportation[1]	Education Housing* Others* Transportation

[1]The superscript numeral represents how many times the need intervention or need surfaced during the gap analysis.
*Represents an unmet need with a higher level of priority.

These findings align with the top solutions suggested by community members and secondary data comparable regions. Comparing Omaha, NE to similar midwestern cities, Kansas City, MO and Des Moines, IA, along with the U.S. more broadly, revealed the following insights:

- **Housing:** Omaha has the highest owner-occupied median housing cost and the second-highest renter-occupied housing cost relative to similar cities. Additionally, although the median salary is lower in Omaha than the U.S., the median owner-occupied housing cost is $64 more indicating that it is harder to buy a home in Omaha.

- **Other:** Omaha has the smallest proportion of SNAP recipients compared to the national average and comparable cities. This could indicate barriers to access rather than lower need, especially given the presence of numerous food banks in the city. Omaha also has a higher proportion of households with children compared to the national average, which may have implications for family support services and economic stability.

- **Education:** Omaha has the second-highest percentage of residents who have not obtained a high school diploma relative to comparable regional cities.

- **Transportation:** Omaha has the highest percentage of residents relying on cars, and the lowest percentage using public transportation (same as Des Moines) relative to similar cities of comparison.

- **Employment:** Omaha has the lowest unemployment rate among the three cities we selected for comparison.

- **Health Care Access:** Omaha has the second-highest uninsured population relative to similar regional cities.

This analysis underscores the importance of prioritizing housing, other needs, education, and transportation in future poverty alleviation efforts while addressing gaps revealed in comparison with peer cities.

The United Way of the Midlands (UWM) completed a Signals and Trends Report to establish data that informs their 2024-2027 strategic plan (United Way of the Midlands, 2024). As part of their research, they conducted a meta-analysis of 26 existing research and planning documents, identifying issues that were both mentioned and prioritized. Whereas transportation was cited as the top need in UWM's research in both 2013 and 2021, housing expense assistance and risk of homelessness were the two topics identified as most salient in 2024 (United Way of the Midlands, 2024). Transportation was listed as the third most salient issue in 2024, followed by public schools (#4), general medical care (#5), food access (#6), environmental protections (#7), and public safety (#8). UWM's ranking of poverty-related issues not only provides a valuable baseline for our own needs assessment but also aligns well with the substantive areas highlighted for research by LB 840.

Implementation Matrix for the Action Plan (LB 840, Section 4(1))

The following matrix summarizes our recommendations for the Action Plan to address poverty in the City of Omaha. The matrix is organized by the key components of poverty elimination addressed in this report. After months of information gathering, data analysis, and reviews of the literature on promising practices in poverty reduction, we began to develop actionable recommendations.

Table 24. Implementation Matrix
Education and Job Training
Early Childhood. Support and expand Head Start and public preschool programs for families with incomes below the poverty level.
Early Childhood. Research the feasibility, costs, and benefits of universal full time pre-kindergarten programs with after care.
K-12. Promote increased funding and support to Omaha Public Schools with the goals to improve education standards, decrease absenteeism, and increase rates of graduation or GED completion, emphasizing schools in LB 840 eligibility zones.
K-12. Collaborate with local non-profits and initiatives (such as Strive for 95), as well as national organizations (such as Attendance Works) to reduce absenteeism and increase graduation rates.
K-12. Collaborate with public schools, local funders and private industry to expand quality job preparation for the trades and dual enrollment for all students, such as the Career and Technical Education Center opened in Fremont.
Higher Education. Partner with community colleges, universities, the Omaha Chamber of Commerce, and local employers to align educational programs with workforce needs, focusing on developing degrees and microcredentials that target high-demand skills and address labor shortages in the Omaha job market.
Higher Education. Expand UNO's Durango Advancement & Support Hub (DASH) model to other higher education institutions, with the goal to support students by building university-community partnerships, enhancing professional development opportunities, and improving students' social mobility.
Adult Education. Enhance United Way 211, a centralized resource hub to connect residents with adult learning and career training opportunities. Actively promote these resources through community outreach and targeted communication strategies to underserved communities.
Economic Development and Employment
Childcare Assistance. Increase workforce participation among parents by providing financial assistance to low-income families seeking high-quality childcare.
Increase minimum wage. Increase Omaha's minimum wage to better align with the current cost-of-living.
Expand Workforce Development Programs. Connect jobseekers with employers in high-demand sectors by providing industry-specific training and job placement services. The City of Omaha, Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce and Heartland Workforce Solutions are uniquely positioned to collaborate to anticipate labor market opportunities and shortfalls and target workforce development to fill market needs.
Adopt Inclusive Hiring Initiatives. Ensure Omaha is hiring individuals from low-income neighborhoods for public projects and private developments receiving City incentives.
Invest in Public-Private Partnerships. Provide grants, tax incentives, and low-interest loans to attract businesses and support workforce training programs. By prioritizing projects that benefit low-income communities, Omaha can ensure inclusive economic growth and foster a thriving business environment.

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). Align new development, affordable housing, and essential services to existing and planned public transportation.[13] TOD is a focus of Omaha's HAAP as well.
Employment for Reentering Population. Promote justice-involved population employment by collaborating with NDCS reentry staff and/or reentry program providers.

Health Care Access
Mental Health and Substance Use. Increase access to emergency and long-term mental health care and substance use/addiction treatment.
Preventative Care. Improve and increase access to free and low-cost preventative care that can be cost-effective in preventing more serious health issues in the long-term.
Caregiver Expenses. Promote policies that expand Medicaid or other coverage of caregiver expenses.
Staffing. Collaborate with educational institutions and medical providers on innovative, local solutions to health care staffing shortages.
Community Health Options. Coordinate with the State Legislature and local organizations to enhance support for expansion of cost-effective community health centers.
Medical Grant and Liaison Program. Research funding sources and the viability of establishing a medical grant and liaison program to fund uninsured medical costs for low-income citizens.

Housing
Housing Subsidies for Persons Experiencing Homelessness. Increase short-term and long-term housing subsidy options for the City's population experiencing homelessness.[14]
Tenant Legal Protections. Review and improve local tenant protections and collaborate with the Nebraska Legislature on statewide efforts in this area.[15]
Tax Increment Financing. Continue to use TIF strategically to create affordable housing opportunities in coordination with efforts to enhance transportation, employment opportunities, and access to services.[16]
Land Bank. Support and coordinate with the Omaha Municipal Land Bank (OMLB).[17]
Land Trusts. Evaluate whether bringing land trusts to Omaha would increase affordable housing options.
Accessory Dwelling Units. Continue to publicize ordinances allowing for accessory dwelling units to expand the City's inventory of affordable housing.
Zoning. Implement zoning changes consistent with the City of Omaha HAAP, which recommends modification of Zoning Ordinances to provide additional residential use types, including: triplexes, quadplexes, and smaller scale multifamily. The City will be doing this as it updates the Master Plan, between now and 2027.
Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. Coordinate with investors to encourage private capital investment in affordable rental housing by utilizing low-income housing tax credits.
Supportive Housing. Expand the number of permanent supportive housing units.[18]

13. Refer to the goal "Advance Housing Stability" on page 34 of Omaha's Housing Affordability Action Plan (https://planninghcd.cityofomaha.org/images/HAAP/Att._3_HAAP_Core_Document.pdf).

14. Refer to the goal "Advance Housing Stability" on page 34 of Omaha's Housing Affordability Action Plan (https://planninghcd.cityofomaha.org/images/HAAP/Att._3_HAAP_Core_Document.pdf).

15. Refer to the goal "Advance Housing Stability" on page 34 of Omaha's Housing Affordability Action Plan (https://planninghcd.cityofomaha.org/images/HAAP/Att._3_HAAP_Core_Document.pdf).

16. Refer to the goal "Increase the Types of Housing to Meet Current & Future Needs" on page 32 of Omaha's Housing Affordability Action Plan (https://planninghcd.cityofomaha.org/images/HAAP/Att._3_HAAP_Core_Document.pdf).

17. Refer to the goal "Foster Housing Innovation to Lower Costs" on page 34 of Omaha's Housing Affordability Action Plan (https://planninghcd.cityofomaha.org/images/HAAP/Att._3_HAAP_Core_Document.pdf).

18. Refer to the goal "Advance Housing Stability" on page 34 of Omaha's Housing Affordability Action Plan (https://planninghcd.cityofomaha.org/images/HAAP/Att._3_HAAP_Core_Document.pdf).

Housing Rehabilitation. Continue attention to rehabilitating existing affordable housing to maintain the affordable housing inventory and save money as compared to new construction.[19] In 2024, the City of Omaha and its housing partners rehabilitated 539 owner-occupied homes, eight vacant homes and 15 vacant multifamily units and will continue to use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Home Investments Partnership Program (HOME) funding to complete projects at a similar or better rate as it executes the consolidated plan into 2028.

Transit-Oriented Development. Align new development, affordable housing, and essential services to existing and planned public transportation.[20] TOD is a focus of the Omaha HAAP as well.

Home Ownership. Support pathways to home ownership such as financial planning and preparation, pre-home purchase education and post purchase education.

Transportation and Infrastructure

Microtransit. Partner with Metro Transit to support their microtransit pilot program.

State Support for Public Transit. Coordinate with the State Legislature to increase state support for public transit in Omaha to bolster increased local investments.

Transit-Oriented Development. Align new development, affordable housing, and essential services to existing and planned public transportation.

Spatial Connective Strategies. Encourage Metro's use of data and research to continue to improve ORBT on Dodge Street and coordinate with Metro in a potential expansion to a north/south route.

Free Student Transit. Support and promote via marketing free transit for students of K-12 and higher education to encourage a new generation of users of public transit.

Community Feedback. Coordinate with Metro to gather community feedback, and use date-informed decision-making, regarding the advantages and challenges of new transit opportunities such as the microtransit pilot, ORBT, and the streetcar.

Additional Community Concerns

Adopt Guaranteed Income Program. Adopt a guaranteed income program modeled after successful initiatives in other cities.

Expand Paid Leave. Increasing the amount of leave available to low-income workers beyond the current maximum of 40–56 hours, which is often insufficient for significant medical or caregiving needs.

Implement Local EITC Program. Provide a 5% match to recipients of the federal EITC. As a first step, the City of Omaha could research this as an option.

EITC for Taxpayers with ITIN. Assess impact of EITC for ITIN taxpayers.

Free or Subsidized Childcare/Pre-School. The City could look for opportunities to expand access to free or subsidized childcare and pre-school programs to support working parents' full participation in the workforce, in partnership with philanthropic institutions.

Community Engagement. In efforts to eliminate poverty, the City should improve community engagement and coordination between government, non-profits, and the private sector. The City will establish a Mayor's Task Force for the Poverty Elimination Action Plan and share progress through community meetings every six months.

Crime/Public Safety. Affordable houses are also peoples' homes, where citizens should feel safe. The City should continue to collaborate with OPD, the Empowerment Network (Omaha 360), and other community organizations to maintain low rates of violence and crime.

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19. Refer to the goal "Preserve Existing Affordable Units" on page 33 of Omaha's Housing Affordability Action Plan (https://planninghcd.cityofomaha.org/images/HAAP/Att._3_HAAP_Core_Document.pdf).
20. Refer to the goal "Advance Housing Stability" on page 34 of Omaha's Housing Affordability Action Plan (https://planninghcd.cityofomaha.org/images/HAAP/Att._3_HAAP_Core_Document.pdf).

Sustainability Plan (LB 840, Section 5(1)(m))

A long-term sustainability plan for this Poverty Elimination Action Plan must integrate the proposed initiatives and programs into ongoing systems, ensuring they continue to thrive and evolve as needs change over time. To achieve this a strategy that incorporates ongoing funding, continuous community involvement, effective monitoring and evaluation, and adaptability is essential. Although it is impossible for the research team to predict which aspects of the PEAP will be successfully implemented, or a timeline for implementation, the following outline is intended to guide the City of Omaha in sustaining poverty elimination efforts.

Funding and Resource Allocation (LB 840, Section 5(1)(l))

Diversify Funding Sources. Similar to any other comprehensive plan of investment, we recommend that poverty elimination efforts seek a diversity of funding sources.

- *Government Funding:* Secure long-term commitments from local, state, and federal governments to fund education, housing, healthcare, and workforce development programs. This could include applying for grants, advocating for policy changes, and lobbying for continued or increased budget allocation.

- *Public-Private Partnerships (PPP):* Foster collaboration with the private sector. Encourage companies to contribute through corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, grants, or tax incentives. Businesses can support workforce development programs and infrastructure projects in exchange for tax breaks or public recognition.

- *Philanthropic Support:* Engage local foundations, non-profit organizations, and national philanthropies to fund specific initiatives, particularly in areas of education, healthcare, and housing.

- *Social Impact Bonds:* Use innovative financing mechanisms like Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) to fund programs in areas like education and workforce development. Investors can pay upfront for programs and receive returns based on measurable outcomes.

Sustainable Funding Models. The most disheartening aspect of most grants and philanthropy is that there is an endpoint, after which sustainability is at risk. The following options have the potential to supplement or supplant finite funding sources.

- *Develop endowment funds* for key initiatives such as healthcare and housing support. These funds would generate income to sustain programs in perpetuity.

- *Create fee-for-service* models where some services (like adult education or career training) could be self-sustaining over time through modest user fees, subsidies, or sliding-scale pricing, while still being affordable to low-income individuals.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement (LB 840, Section 5(1)(b), 5(1)(n))

Ongoing Collaboration. Although funding might be the most important aspect of sustainability, stakeholder buy-in is essential as well. We recommend that the City of Omaha builds a formal structure for continued collaboration between government, non-profits, businesses, and the community. A Community Advisory Board or Poverty Elimination Coalition could be formed to ensure that initiatives align with community needs and priorities.

- *Regular Community Feedback:* Use surveys, focus groups, and public forums to continuously engage the community in identifying gaps in services and to ensure that programs evolve to meet the needs of residents.

- *Inclusive Governance:* Include individuals with lived experience of poverty in decision-making processes to ensure that policies and programs are grounded in real-world needs and solutions.

Capacity Building for Local Organizations. Provide training, resources, and technical assistance to local

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Poverty Elimination Action Plan

non-profits and grassroots organizations. This ensures that these groups have the skills and capacity to continue supporting their communities.

Data Collection, Monitoring, and Evaluation

Data Infrastructure. Develop a centralized data system that tracks the effectiveness of poverty reduction initiatives. This system should integrate data across sectors like education, housing, healthcare, and employment to allow for informed decision-making.

- *Performance Measures:* Define clear, measurable outcomes for each initiative, such as increased graduation rates, higher employment rates, better access to healthcare, and reduced homelessness.

- *Ongoing Evaluation:* Implement a continuous evaluation process using both qualitative and quantitative methods. This could include annual evaluations, community feedback loops, and external audits to assess the impact and identify areas for improvement.

- *Adaptive Management:* Use evaluation data to adapt programs as needed. If certain initiatives are less effective or need scaling, adjustments should be made to optimize impact.

Policy and Systemic Change

Advocate for Long-Term Policy Support. Work to institutionalize poverty reduction initiatives through policy changes. For example, ensure that funding for education, healthcare, and affordable housing becomes a permanent part of the City's budget.

- *State and Federal Advocacy:* Actively advocate for state and federal policies that align with the goals of the poverty elimination plan, such as expanded Medicaid, housing subsidies, and workforce development funding.

- *Create Enabling Legislation:* Work to pass local laws that provide long-term support for the programs, such as requiring businesses to pay a living wage, expanding tenant protections, and ensuring the continued support of public transit.

Communication and Public Awareness (LB 840 Section 5(1)(o))

Public Awareness Campaigns. Launch campaigns to inform the public about the importance of these initiatives and how they contribute to the community's overall well-being. This would help maintain public support and encourage involvement in poverty alleviation efforts.

- Use local media, social media, and community outreach programs to keep the public informed about the progress and impact of these initiatives.

Transparency and Accountability. Regularly publish progress reports on the status of poverty elimination initiatives, including financial audits and impact assessments, to build public trust and ensure transparency.

Innovation and Flexibility

Promote Innovation. Continuously explore new ways to address poverty, including leveraging new technologies, business models, and community-based innovations. This could involve piloting new programs in specific neighborhoods or testing new financial models to support social good. Attend conferences, symposia, webinars, and other events disseminating promising practices and evidence-based practices from other cities and gauge their applicability to Omaha.

- *Respond to Changing Needs:* Adapt to economic shifts, population changes, and emerging social challenges. For example, if a new industry arises in Omaha, align educational and workforce development programs to support these new job sectors.

Conclusion

The long-term sustainability of Omaha's poverty elimination efforts hinges on diversified and stable funding, ongoing collaboration among stakeholders, data-driven decision-making, policy advocacy, and flexibility to adapt to new challenges. By integrating these strategies into the City's systems and ensuring continued community involvement, Omaha can forge a path towards a self-sustaining framework for poverty reduction that remains effective over time.

Tracking Progression Across Need Domains (LB 840 Section 5(1)(k))

LB 840 directs the City to "establish metrics for progress tracking" for the Poverty Elimination Action Plan. To this end, we have provided a Matrix for Progress Tracking that corresponds to the recommendations in this report. Note that an asterisk next to a recommendation indicates a recommendation that is largely not within the City's control, but the City can commit to working with relevant partners to promote progress.

Matrix for Progress Tracking

Table 25. Poverty Elimination Recommendation: Education and Job Training			
Recommendation	Rating	Place an X next to the most applicable rating	Description and explanation
Early Childhood: Support and expand HeadStart and public preschool programs for families with incomes below the poverty level.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
*Early Childhood: research the feasibility, costs, and benefits of universal pre-kindergarten programs.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
*K-12: Promote increased funding and support to Omaha Public Schools with the goals to improve education standards, decrease absenteeism, and increase rates of graduation, emphasizing schools in LB 840 eligibility zones.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
*K-12: Collaborate with local non-profits and initiatives (such as Strive for 95), as well as national organizations (such as Attendance Works) to reduce absenteeism and increase graduation rates.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		

*K-12: Collaborate with public schools, local funders and private industry to expand quality job preparation for the trades, such as the Career and Technical Education Center opened in Fremont.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
*Higher Education: Partner with community colleges, universities, the Omaha Chamber of Commerce, and local employers to align educational programs with workforce needs, focusing on developing degrees and microcredentials that target high-demand skills and address labor shortages in the Omaha job market.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
*Higher Education: Expand UNO's Durango Advancement & Support Hub (DASH) model to other higher education institutions, with the goal to support students by building university-community partnerships, enhancing professional development opportunities, and improving students' social mobility.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Adult Education: Enhance United Way 211, a centralized resource hub to connect residents with adult learning and career training opportunities. Actively promote these resources through community outreach and targeted communication strategies to underserved communities.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		

Table 26. Poverty Elimination Recommendation: Economic Development and Employment

Recommendation	Rating	Place an X next to the most applicable rating	Description and explanation
Childcare Assistance. Increase workforce participation among parents by providing financial assistance to low-income families seeking high-quality childcare.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Increase minimum wage. Increase Omaha's minimum wage to better align with the current cost-of-living.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Expand Workforce Development Programs. Connect jobseekers with employers in high-demand sectors by providing industry-specific training and job placement services.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Adopt Inclusive Hiring Initiatives. Ensure Omaha is hiring individuals from low-income neighborhoods for public projects and private developments receiving City incentives.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Invest in Public-Private Partnerships. Provide grants, tax incentives, and low-interest loans to attract businesses and support workforce training programs. By prioritizing projects that benefit low-income communities, Omaha can ensure inclusive economic growth and foster a thriving business environment.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Transit-Oriented Development. Align new development, affordable housing, and essential services to existing and planned public transportation.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		

*Employment for Reentering Population. Collaborate with NDCS reentry staff and community reentry organizations to promote employment of justice-involved individuals.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		

Table 27. Poverty Elimination Recommendation: Hearth Care Access			
Recommendation	Rating	Place an X next to the most applicable rating	Description and explanation
*Mental Health and Substance Use. Increase access to emergency and long-term mental health care and substance use/addiction treatment.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
*Preventative Care. Improve and increase access to free and low-cost preventative care that can be cost-effective in preventing more serious health issues in the long-term.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Caregiver Expenses. Promote policies that expand Medicaid or other coverage of caregiver expenses.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Staffing. Collaborate with educational institutions and medical providers on innovative, local solutions to health care staffing shortages."	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
*Community Health Options. Coordinate with the State Legislature and local organizations to enhance support for expansion of cost-effective community health centers.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		

Medical Grant and Liaison Program. Research funding sources and the viability of establishing a medical grant and liaison program to fund uninsured medical costs for low-income citizens.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		

Table 28. Poverty Elimination Recommendation: Housing			
Recommendation	Rating	Place an X next to the most applicable rating	Description and explanation
Housing Subsidies for Persons Experiencing Homelessness. Increase short-term and long-term housing subsidy options for the City's population experiencing homelessness.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Tenant Legal Protections. Review and improve local tenant protections and collaborate with the Nebraska Legislature on statewide efforts in this area.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Tax Increment Financing. Continue to use TIF strategically to create affordable housing opportunities in coordination with efforts to enhance transportation, employment opportunities, and access to services.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Land Bank. Support and coordinate with the Omaha Municipal Land Bank (OMLB).	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Land Trust. Evaluate whether bringing land trusts to Omaha would increase affordable housing options.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		

Accessory Dwelling Units. Continue to publicize ordinances allowing for accessory dwelling units to expand the City's inventory of affordable housing.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Zoning. Implement zoning changes consistent with the City of Omaha HAAP, which recommends modification of Zoning Ordinances to provide additional residential use types, including: triplexes, quadplexes, and smaller scale multifamily. The City will be doing this as it updates the Master Plan, between now and 2027.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
*Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. Coordinate with investors to encourage private capital investment in affordable rental housing by utilizing low-income housing tax credits.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Supportive Housing. Expand the number of permanent supportive housing units.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Housing Rehabilitation. Continue attention to rehabilitating existing affordable housing to maintain the affordable housing inventory and save money as compared to new construction.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Home Ownership. Support pathways to home ownership such as financial planning and preparation, pre-home purchase education and post purchase education.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		

Recommendation	Rating	Place an X next to the most applicable rating	Description and explanation
Table 29. Poverty Elimination Recommendation: Transportation and Infrastructure			
*Microtransit. Partner with Metro Transit to support their microtransit pilot program.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
*State Support for Public Transit. Coordinate with the State Legislature to increase state support for public transit in Omaha to bolster increased local investments.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Transit-Oriented Development. Align new development, affordable housing, and essential services to existing and planned public transportation.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
*Spatial Connective Strategies. Encourage Metro's use of data and research to continue to improve ORBT on Dodge Street and coordinate with Metro in a potential expansion to a north/south route.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
*Free Student Transit. Support and promote via marketing free transit for students of K-12 and higher education to encourage a new generation of users of public transit.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
*Community Feedback. Coordinate with Metro to gather community feedback, and use date-informed decision-making, regarding the advantages and challenges of new transit opportunities such as the microtransit pilot, ORBT, and the streetcar.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		

Recommendation	Rating	Place an X next to the most applicable rating	Description and explanation
Adopt Guaranteed Income Program. Adopt a guaranteed income program modeled after successful initiatives in other cities.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Expand Paid Leave. Increasing the amount of leave available to low-income workers beyond the current maximum of 40–56 hours, which is often insufficient for significant medical or caregiving needs.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Implement Local EITC Program. Provide a 5% match to recipients of the federal EITC.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
EITC for Taxpayers with ITIN: Assess impact of EITC for ITIN taxpayers.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
*Free or Subsidized Childcare/Pre-School. The City could look for opportunities to expand access to free or subsidized childcare and pre-school programs to support working parents' full participation in the workforce, in partnership with philanthropic institutions.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		
Community Engagement. In efforts to eliminate poverty, the City should improve community engagement and coordination between government, non-profits, and the private sector.	Not feasible at this time		
	Partially in place		
	Mostly in place		
	Fully implemented		
	Exceeds expectations		

*Crime/Public Safety. Affordable houses are also peoples' homes, where citizens should feel safe. The City should continue to collaborate with OPD, the Empowerment Network (Omaha 360), and other community organizations to maintain low rates of violence and crime.	Not feasible at this time	
	Partially in place	
	Mostly in place	
	Fully implemented	
	Exceeds expectations	

NOTE: an asterisk next to a recommendation indicates a recommendation that is largely not within the City's control, but the City can commit to working with relevant partners to promote progress.

Conclusion

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of poverty in Omaha, integrating national, state, and local data with community-driven insights to highlight the multifaceted nature of economic hardship. Poverty extends beyond financial instability, it limits access to essential resources, shapes health and well-being, and reinforces structural inequities that disproportionately affect marginalized communities. The findings reveal persistent racial and geographic disparities in economic opportunity, underscoring the urgent need for targeted policy interventions.

While poverty in Omaha has decreased since 2012, we observed that the poverty rate has maintained despite significant efforts to reduce its effects. We then had to grapple with the question, what does our community need to do to ensure that every resident has a chance to help our community flourish? Omaha has ample resources, but eliminating poverty will require collective will, sustained commitment, strategic investment, and cross-sector collaboration. While Omaha has a strong foundation of organizations and initiatives addressing poverty, systemic barriers continue to prevent many residents from achieving economic security. Addressing these challenges will require bold policy solutions, expanded access to education and workforce development, affordable housing investments, and equitable transportation and healthcare systems.

The Poverty Elimination Action Plan serves as a roadmap for the City of Omaha and its partners to create meaningful, long-term change. By centering community voices, leveraging data-driven strategies, and fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration, Omaha can move toward a future where every resident has the opportunity to thrive. The success of this plan will depend not only on policy implementation but also on sustained advocacy, innovation, and accountability. A commitment to equity and inclusion must remain at the core of all efforts to ensure that progress is both transformative and lasting.

This work reflects the Four Pillars of the University of Nebraska Omaha, where the authors of this report serve as researchers. It aligns with the university's mission to educate all learners by addressing structural barriers to education, advance pragmatic research and discovery for public good, promote community engagement and partnerships to enhance social and economic mobility, and support workforce and economic development to strengthen Omaha's industries. Through these guiding principles, this report is not just an academic objective, rather it is a call to action for a more equitable and prosperous future for all.

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Appendix A. Survey for Organizations that Address Poverty

Thank you for your willingness to participate in a critical needs assessment survey as part of Omaha's Poverty Elimination Action Plan, in compliance with Nebraska Legislature's LB840. As valued community organizations, your insights are vital in identifying the current accomplishments and challenges related to poverty and poverty alleviation within Omaha. This survey is designed to gather comprehensive information on the efforts and needs in our community, and your participation will directly contribute to the development of an effective poverty elimination plan. The survey will take approximately 15-30 minutes to complete.

Please select specific needs related to poverty and poverty alleviation your organization targets? [select all that apply]

- [ ] Education
- [ ] Employment
- [ ] Health
- [ ] Housing
- [ ] Safety
- [ ] Transportation
- [ ] Other

Please list the specific activities, programs, events, etc. that are sponsored or conducted by your organization that aid in poverty alleviation.

If available, please provide associated documentation such as annual reports, reports to funders, flyers, websites, or other materials that would provide more details on your organization's poverty alleviation work. (If this information is on your website, please paste the link with your response to this question. If your materials are pdfs or documents, please send them as email attachments by replying to our email or send them to Dr. Spohn at rspohn@unomaha.edu. You can also take pictures of materials and send the pictures as email attachments.)

Please provide the primary zip code your organization serves within Omaha. You are also welcome to describe the primary geographic areas.

Please share any data you have collected regarding the impact of poverty in the population you serve. This may include but is not limited to poverty reduction involving access to education, health, housing, safety, and/or transportation. (If this information is on your website, please paste the link with your response to this question. If your materials are Excel files, pdfs or documents, please send them as email attachments by replying to our email or send them to Dr. Spohn at rspohn@unomaha.edu. You can also take pictures of materials and send the pictures as email attachments.)

Please share any existing evidence you have regarding the impact/outcomes of your organization's programs on poverty. Another way to think of "impact/outcomes" is to say, does your organization have any way to show that they are moving the needle or accomplishing what they have set out to do? (If this information is on your website, please paste the link with your response to this question. If your materials are pdfs or documents, please send them as email attachments by replying to our email or send them to Dr. Spohn at rspohn@unomaha.edu. You can also take pictures of materials and send the pictures as email attachments.)

How are your poverty alleviation efforts related to your organization's mission?

What needs do you see in the community that continue to exist or are beyond the scope of your organization's current work and are not being adequately addressed by other community organizations or resources?

Is there any other information you would like to provide to assist us in developing Omaha's poverty elimination plan?

Thank you again for your time and contributions. Together, we can make a significant impact in the fight against poverty in Omaha. We look forward to your response and continued partnership.

The University of Nebraska does not discriminate based on race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, marital status, and/or political affiliation in its education programs or activities, including admissions and employment. The University prohibits any form of retaliation being taken against anyone for reporting discrimination, harassment, or retaliation for otherwise engaging in protected activity. **Read the full statement.**

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Appendix B. Summary of Organization Survey Data

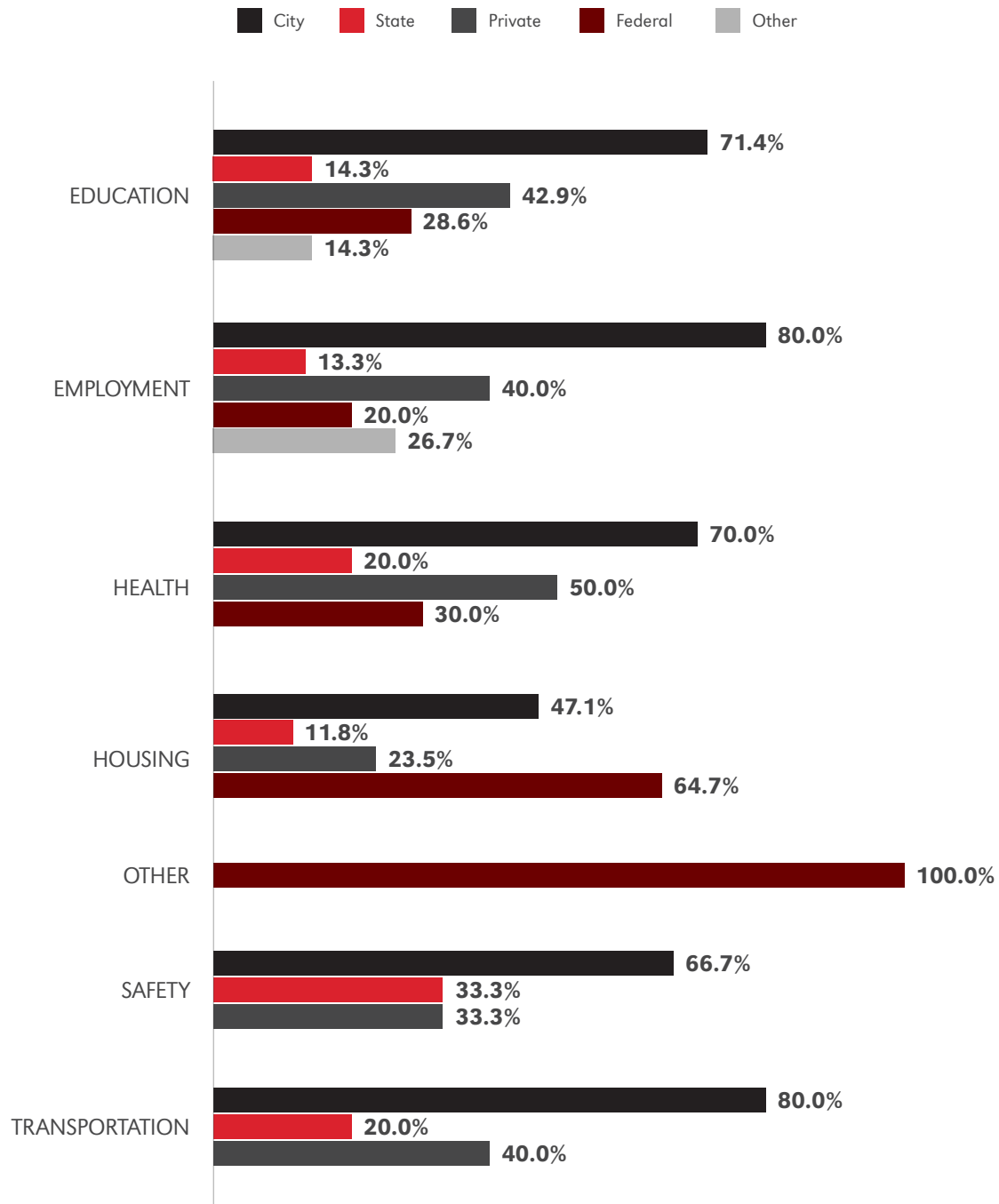| Table 31. Summary of Omaha Organization Data		
		Percent (%)
Needs Targeted	Education	56.8
	Employment	45.9
	Health	45.9
	Housing	40.5
	Other	35.1
	Safety	18.9
	Transportation	27.0
		Percent (%)
Mission Relationship to Poverty	Direct	46.0
	Indirect	43.2
		Percent (%)
Reported Needs Beyond Scope	Education	13.5
	Employment	10.8
	Health	21.6
	Housing	45.9
	Other	29.7
	Safety	8.1
	Transportation	21.6
		Percent (%)
Primary Areas Served (Omaha)*	North	29.7
	South	18.9
	East	13.5
	Midtown	10.8
	Greater Omaha/Metro	48.6

* These regional boundaries are evaluator-defined categories, utilizing both zip codes and organization-reported regions, intended to reflect conventionally understood geographic divisions. Zip codes were grouped into five regions based on their geographic location within Omaha. North Omaha includes areas north of Dodge Street, such as Benson and Florence. South Omaha comprises areas south of downtown, including neighborhoods like Deer Park and Spring Lake. East Omaha encompasses the downtown core and neighborhoods along the Missouri River, generally east of 42nd Street, including the Old Market and Near North Side. Midtown Omaha includes centrally located neighborhoods roughly between 42nd and 72nd Streets, such as Aksarben and Dundee. West Omaha includes areas west of 72nd Street, extending into suburban neighborhoods such as Millard and Elkhorn.

Appendix C. Summary of City of Omaha Poverty Alleviation Efforts

Table 32. Summary of City of Omaha Poverty Alleviation Efforts		
		Percent (%)
	Education	23.3
	Employment	50.0
	Health	33.3
Needs Targeted	Housing	56.7
	Other	3.3
	Safety	10.0
	Transportation	16.7
		Percent (%)
	City	63.3
Efforts Across Funding Sources	Federal	40.0
	Private	30.0
	Other	13.3
	State	10.0

Appendix D. City Poverty Alleviation Efforts Across Needs & Funding Source

FIGURE 13:
CITY OF OMAHA ALLEVIATION EFFORTS NEEDS BY FUNDING SOURCES

Legend: ■ City ■ State ■ Private ■ Federal ■ Other

EDUCATION
- City: 71.4%
- State: 14.3%
- Private: 42.9%
- Federal: 28.6%
- Other: 14.3%

EMPLOYMENT
- City: 80.0%
- State: 13.3%
- Private: 40.0%
- Federal: 20.0%
- Other: 26.7%

HEALTH
- City: 70.0%
- State: 20.0%
- Private: 50.0%
- Federal: 30.0%

HOUSING
- City: 47.1%
- State: 11.8%
- Private: 23.5%
- Federal: 64.7%

OTHER
- Federal: 100.0%

SAFETY
- City: 66.7%
- State: 33.3%
- Private: 33.3%

TRANSPORTATION
- City: 80.0%
- State: 20.0%
- Private: 40.0%

Appendix E. Community Engagement Attendee Characteristics

Table 33. Background Characteristics of Community Survey Respondents (n=53)		
Categories	Response Type	Percentage %
Race	American Indian/Alaskan Native	3.8
	Asian Pacific Islander	0.0
	Black	20.8
	Latino	15.1
	White	32.1
	Multiracial	11.3
	Other	5.7
	No Response	11.3
Sex	Male	28.3
	Female	49.1
	Other	1.9
	No Response	20.8
Zip Code Region*	East	9.4
	Midtown	16.9
	North	20.8
	South	9.4
	West	43.4

* These regional boundaries are evaluator-defined categories intended to reflect conventionally understood geographic divisions. Self-reported zip codes were grouped into five regions based on their geographic location within Omaha. North Omaha includes areas north of Dodge Street, such as Benson and Florence. South Omaha comprises areas south of downtown, including neighborhoods like Deer Park and Spring Lake. East Omaha encompasses the downtown core and neighborhoods along the Missouri River, generally east of 42nd Street, including the Old Market and Near North Side. Midtown Omaha includes centrally located neighborhoods roughly between 42nd and 72nd Streets, such as Aksarben and Dundee. West Omaha includes areas west of 72nd Street, extending into suburban neighborhoods such as Millard and Elkhorn.

# Appendix F. Community Engagement Event Poverty Trees

North Omaha Tree 1: Root Causes and Solutions for Poverty
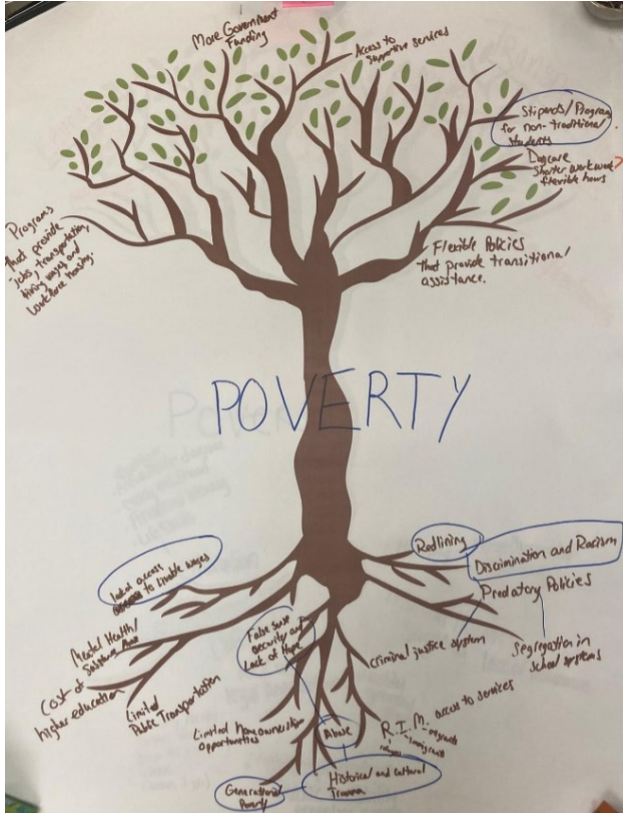
Solutions: Programs that provide jobs, transportation, living wages, and work (?) force housing; More government funding; Access to supportive services; Stipends/ programs for non-traditional students; Daycare; Shorter workweek; Flexible hours; Flexible policies that provide transitional assistance

Root Causes: Lack of access to livable wages; Mental health/ substance abuse; Cost of higher education; Limited public transportation; False sense of security and lack of hope; Abuse; Historical and cultural trauma; Generational poverty; Limited homeownership opportunities; Redlining; Discrimination and racism; Predatory policies; Criminal justice system; Segregation in school systems; Access to services; R.I.M; Refugees, immigrants, migrants
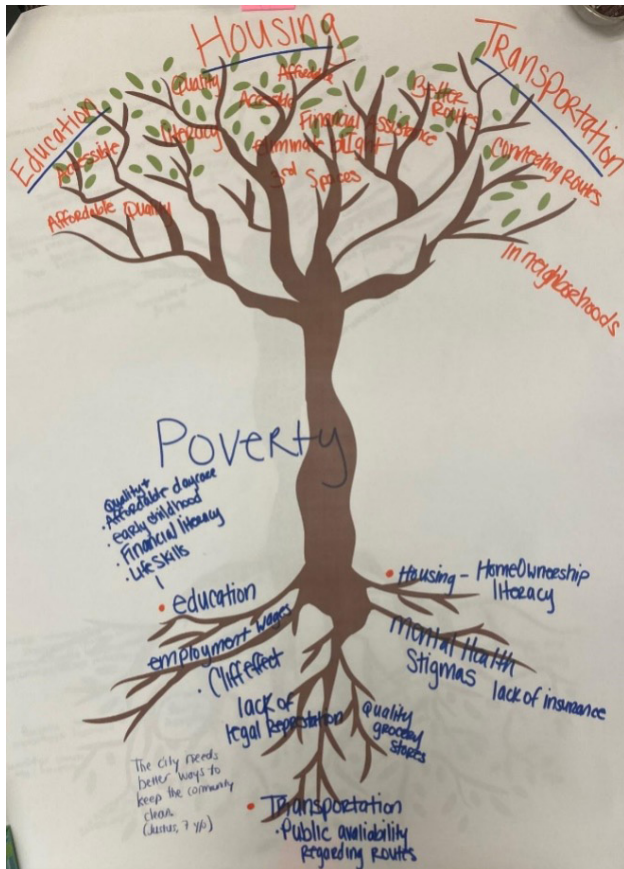
Solutions: Housing (Quality, Accessible, Affordable, Literacy, Financial Assistance, Eliminate Blight, Third Spaces); Education (Accessible, Affordable, Quality); Transportation (Connecting Routes, In Neighborhoods, Better Routes)

Root Causes: Education, life skills; Quality and affordable daycare; Early childhood; Financial literacy; Employment wages; Cliff effect; Lack of legal representation; Quality grocery stores; Transportation; Public availability regarding routes; Mental health stigmas; Lack of insurance; Housing; Homeownership literacy; "The city needs better ways to keep the community clean" (Name, 7 y/o)
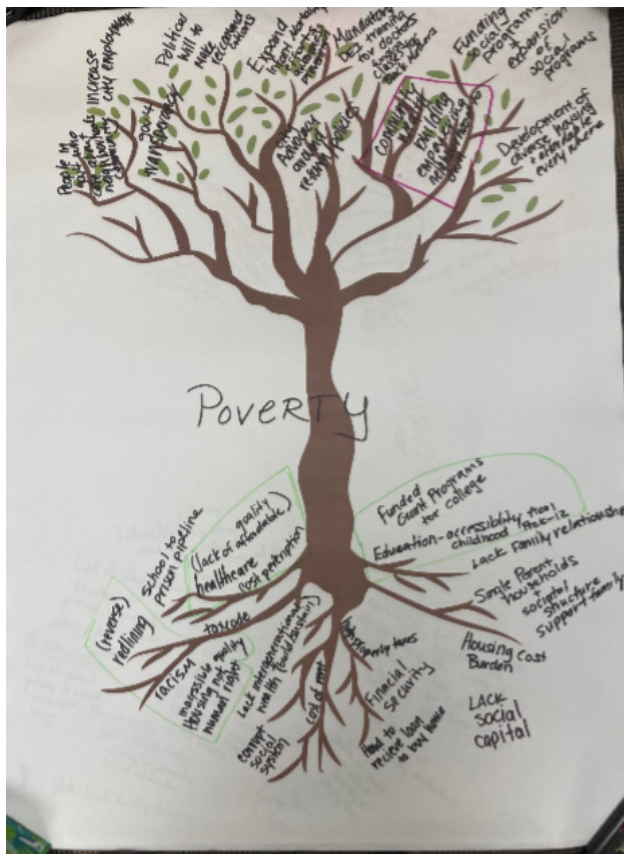
Solutions: People in govt who care about neighborhood community; Increase city employment; Govt transparency; Political will to make recommendation; Expand infant mortality efforts awareness prevention; City advocacy around reform/policies; Mandatory DEI training for doctors; Funding classes for Black mothers; Funding social programs + expansion of social programs; Development of diverse housing + affordable everywhere; Community wealth building empowering neighborhood to own

Root Causes: School to prison pipeline; Tax code; (Reverse) redlining; Racism; Inaccessible housing not human right quality (?); Healthcare; Cost prescription; Lack of affordable/ quality; Lack intergenerational wealth (build/ sustain); Corrupt social system; Cost of rent; High property taxes; Financial security; Hard to receive loan to buy home; Housing cost burden; Lack social capital; Single parents households + societal structure support family; Lack family relationship; Education – accessibility from childhood prek-12; Funded grant programs for college

North Omaha Tree 4: Root Causes and Solutions for Poverty
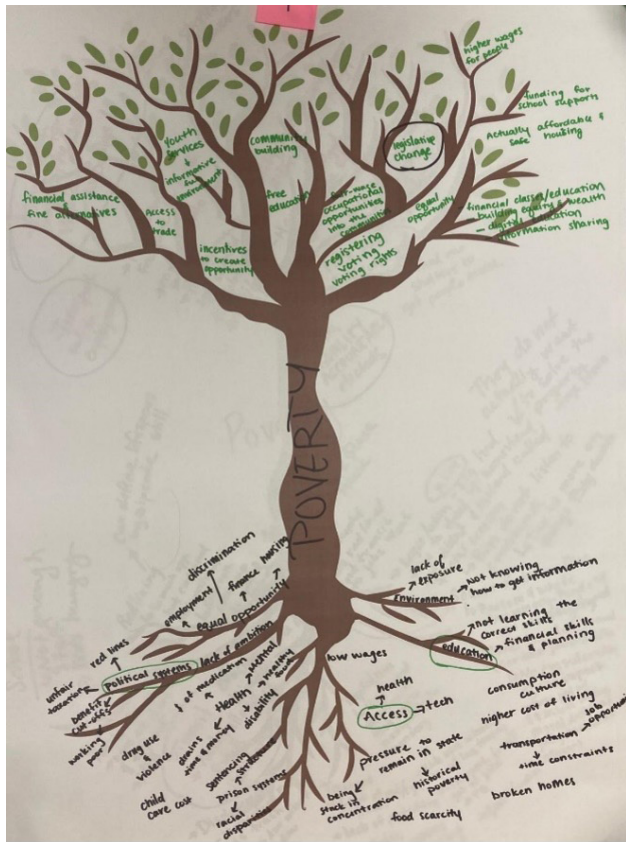
Solutions: Financial assistance & fine alternatives; Access to trade; Youth services & informative fun environment; Incentives to create opportunity; Community building; Free education; Fair-wage; Occupational opportunities into the community; Registering voting; Voting rights; Legislative change; Equal opportunity; Financial classes/ education; Building equity & wealth; Digital education; Information sharing; Higher wages for people; Funding for school supports; Actually affordable & safe housing

Root Causes: Political systems; Unfair taxation; Red lines; Benefit cut-offs; Working poor; Lack of ambition; Equal opportunity; Employment; Finance; Housing; Discrimination; Health; Mental; Healthy food; Disability; $ of medication; Drains time & money; Drug use & violence; Child care cost; Prison systems; Sentencing structure; Racial disparities; Low wages; Pressure to remain in state; Historical poverty; Being stuck in concentration; Food scarcity; Access; Health; Tech; Broken homes; Consumption culture; Higher cost of living; Transportation; Job opportunities; Time constraints; Education; Not learning the correct skills; Financial skills & planning; Environment; Lack of exposure; Not knowing how to get information
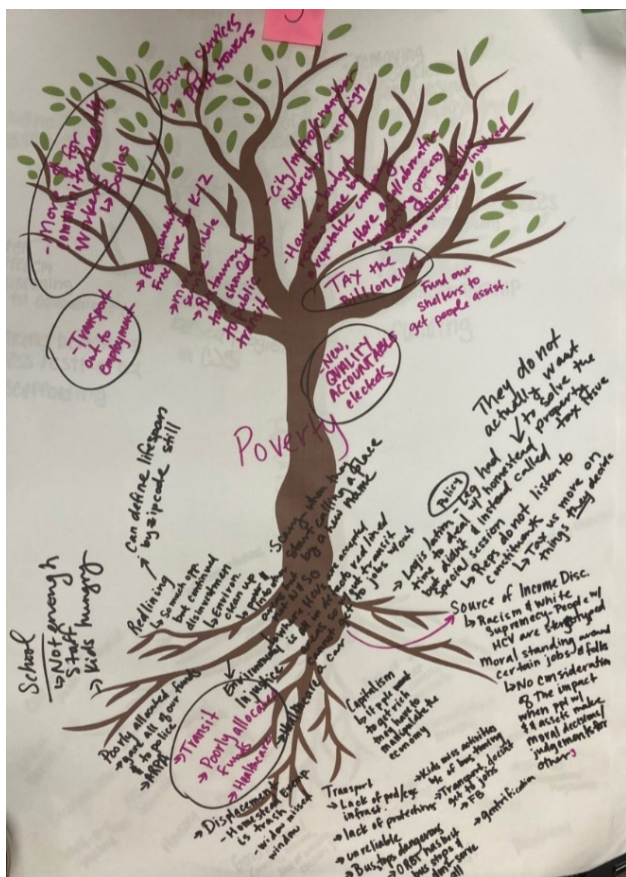
Solutions: Transport out to employment; Permanent free fare for K-12; More reliable service; Restaurant tax should go to public transit; More $ for community health workers – Doulas; Bring services to PHA towers; City/metro/chamber ridership campaign; Havea budget review done by a reputable company; Have a collaborative budgeting process; Education for fellas who want to be involved; Tax the billionaires; Fund our shelters to get people assist; New, QUALITY ACCOUNTABLE electeds (?)

Root Causes: School; Not enough staff; Kids hungry; Redlining; Can define lifespan by zipcode still; So much opp. But continued disinvestment; Environ. Clean up; Pour into other areas but not N & S O; Scary when they start calling a place by a new name; Environmental injustice; Where (hcvs) are accepted is all in de facto red lined areas so w/out transit cannot get to jobs w/out a car; Source of income disc; Racism & white supremacy – people w/ HCV are stereotyped; Moral standing around certain jobs & folks; No consideration of the impact when ppl w/ $$ assets make moral decisions/ judgements for others; Healthcare; Poorly allocated funds; Gave all of our $ to police; ARPA; Displacement; Homestead exemp. is trash; Widow missed window; Transport; Lack of ped/ cyc infrast; Lack of protections; Unreliable; Bus stops dangerous; ORBT has best bus stops & don't serve all; Kids miss activities b/c of bus timing; Transport. Doesn't get to jobs; FB; Gentrification; Capitalism; If pple want toget rich they have to manipulate the economy; Policy; Legislation – leg had time to deal w/ homestead but didn't 7 instead called special session; Reps do not listen to constituents; Tax us more on things they decide; They do not actually want to solve the property tax issue

North Omaha Tree 6: Root Causes and Solutions for Poverty
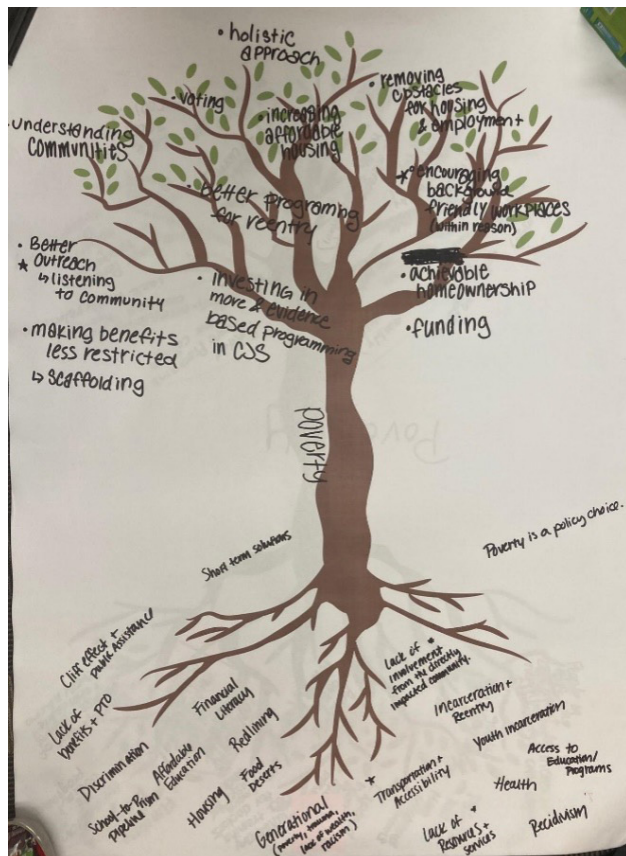
Solutions: Making benefits less restricted; Scaffolding; Understanding communities; Holistic approach; Voting; Increasing affordable housing; Better programming for reentry; Removing obstacles for housing & employment; Encouraging background friendly workplace (within reason); Achievable homeownership; Funding; Investing in more & evidence based programming in CJS; Better outreach; Listening to community

Root Causes: Cliff effect + public assistance; Lack of benefits + PTO; Discrimination; School-to-prison pipeline; Affordable housing; Financial literacy; Short term solutions; Redlining; Food deserts; Housing; Generational (poverty, trauma, lack of wealth, racism); Poverty is a policy choice; Lack of involvement from the directly impacted community; Incarceration + reentry; Youth incarceration; Access to educational programs; Health; Transportation + accessibility; Lack of resources + services; Recidivism
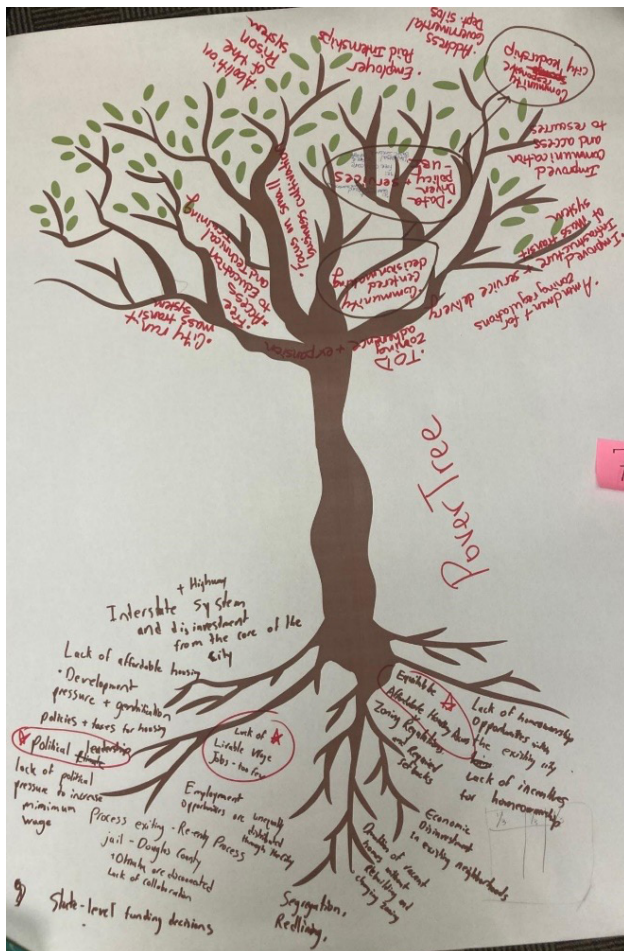
Solutions: City run mass transit system; Free access to education and technical training; Focus on small business cultivation; Abolition of the prison system; TOD zoning adherence + expansion; Community centered decision making; Data driven policy + services (i.e., government subsidized home ownership, free childcare); UBI (i.e., universal basic income); Amendment for zoning regulations; Improved infrastructure + service delivery of mass transit system; Improved communication and access to resources; Community responsible City leadership; Employer paid internships; Address governmental dept. silos

Root Causes: Interstate + highway system and disinvestment from the core of the city; Lack of affordable housing; Development pressure + gentrification; Policies + taxes for housing; Political leadership; Lack of political pressure to increase minimum wage; Lack of livable wage jobs – too few; Employment opportunities are unequally distributed through the city; Process exiting jail o re-entry process; Douglas county + Omaha are disconnected; Lack of collaboration; State- level funding decisions; Segregation; Redlining; Demolition of vacant homes without rebuilding and changing zoning; Economic disinvestment in existing neighborhoods; Lack of homeownership opportunities with the existing city; Lack of incentives for homeownership; Equitable affordable housing access; Zoning regulations and required set backs

South Omaha Tree 1: Root Causes and Solutions for Poverty
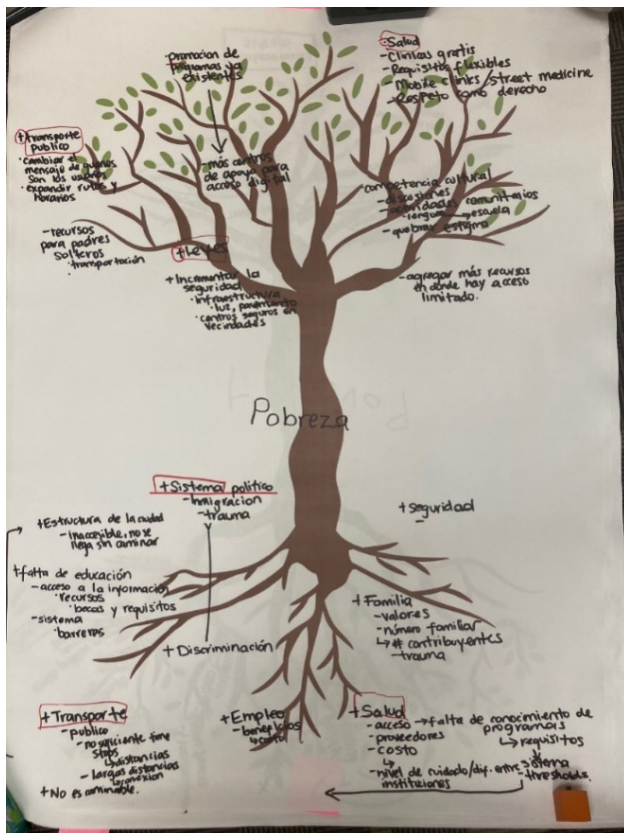
Community Engagement Feedback in Spanish

Causas de raíz: Transporte Público; No suficiente time stops; Distancias; Largas distancias; Conexión; No es caminable; Estructura de la ciudad; Inaccesible, no se llega sin caminar; Falta de educación; Acceso a la información; Recursos; Becas y requisitos; Sistema; Barreras; Sistema político; Inmigración; Trauma; Discriminación; Seguridad; Familia; Valores; Número familiar; # contribuyentes; Trauma; Empleo; Beneficios; Costo; Salud; Acceso o falta de conocimiento de programas; Requisitos; Sistema; Proveedores; Costo; Nivel de cuidado/ diferencia entre instituciones; Thresholds.

Soluciones: Leyes; Incrementar la seguridad; Infraestructura; Luz, pavimento; Centros seguros en vecindades; Transporte público; Cambiar el mensaje de quienes son los usuarios; Expander rutas y horarios; Promoción de programas ya existentes; Más centros de apoyo para acceso digital; Salud; Clínicas gratis; Requisitos flexibles; Clínicas móviles/medicina en la calle; Respeto como derecho; Competencia cultural; Discusiones; Actividades comunitarias; Lenguas en las escuelas; Quebrar stigma; Agregar más recursos en donde hay acceso limitado.

Community Engagement Feedback Translated into English

Root Causes: Public transportation; Not enough time stops; Distances; Big distances; Connection; Not walkable; City structure; Inaccessible, can't get there without walking; Lack of education; Access to information; Resources; Scholarships and requirements; System; Barriers; Political system; Immigration; Trauma; Discrimination; Security; Family; Values; Family number; # of contributors; Trauma; Employment; Benefits; Cost; Health; Access or lack of awareness of programs; Requirements; System; Providers; Cost; Level of care/differences between institutions; Thresholds.

Solutions: Laws; Increase security/safety; Infrastructure; Lighting, pavement; Safe centers in neighborhoods; Public transportation; Change the message of who the customers are; Expand routes and schedules; Promoting existing programs; More centers for help/assistance with digital access; Health; Free clinics; Flexible requirements; Mobile clinics/street medicine; Respect as a right; Cultural competence; Discussions as public engagement; Community activities; Languages in the schools; Break stigma; Add more resources where there is limited access.

South Omaha Tree 2: Root Causes and Solutions for Poverty
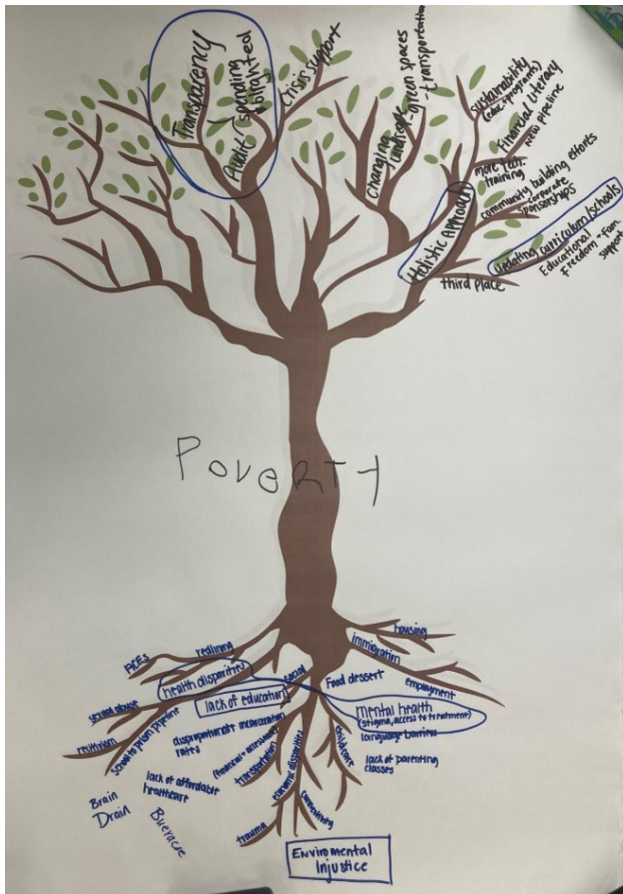
Solutions: Transparency; Audit; Spending blighted; Crisis support; Changing landscape; Green spaces; Transportation; Holistic approach; Third place; Sustainability; Educ.+ programs; Financial literacy; New pipelines; More tech. training; Community building efforts; Corporate sponsorships; Updating curriculum/ schools; Educational freedom + fam. Support

Root Causes: ACEs; Redlining; Sexual abuse; Housing; Immigration; Food desert; Employment; Social; Lack of education; Health disparities; Mental health; Stigma; Access to treatment; Recidivism; Brain drain; School-to-prison pipeline; Bureaucracy; Language barriers; Lack of affordable healthcare; Disproportionate incarceration rates; Trauma; Economic disparities; Connectivity; Childcare; Lack of parenting classes; Environmental injustice; Financial + accessible; Economic disparities; Transportation

South Omaha Tree 3: Root Causes and Solutions for Poverty
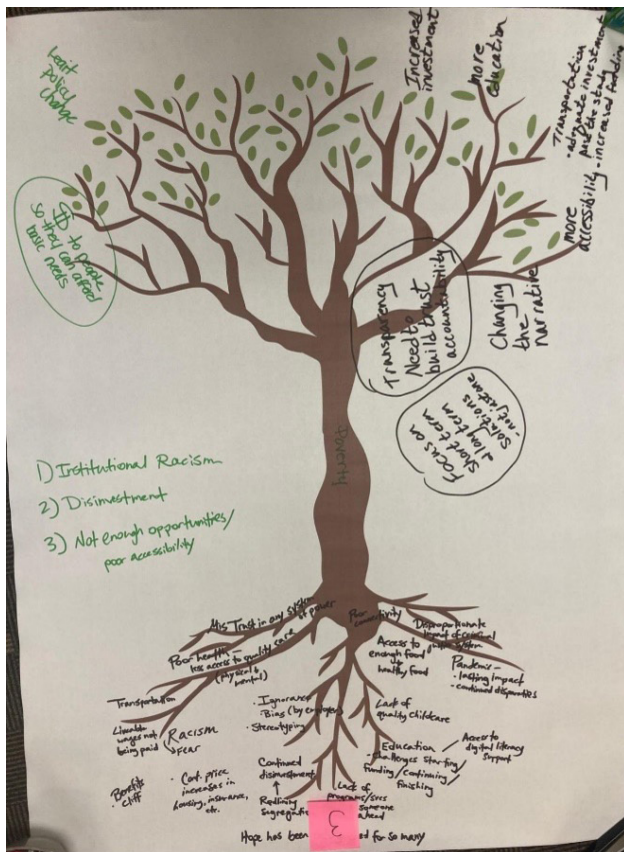
Solutions: $ to people so they can afford basic needs; Legit political change; Transparency; Need to build trust; Accountability; Focus on short-term & long-term solutions – not just one; Changing the narrative; Increased investment; More education; Transportation; Adequate investment; (blank) the study; Increased funding; More accessibility

Root Causes: Mistrust in any system of power; Poor health; Less access to quality care (physical to mental); Transportation; Livable wages not being paid; Racism; Institutional racism; Fear; Benefits; Cliff; Cont. price increases in housing, insurance, etc.; Ignorance; Bias (by employer); Stereotyping; Poor connectivity; Disproportionate impact of criminal justice system; Access to enough food & healthy food; Pandemic; Lasting impact; Continued disparities; Lack of quality childcare; Education; Challenges starting/ funding/ continuing/ finishing; Access to digital literacy support; Lack of programs/ services to help someone move ahead; Continued disinvestment; Redlining segregation; Not enough opportunities/ poor accessibility; Hope has been extinguished for so many

South Omaha Tree 4: Root Causes and Solutions for Poverty
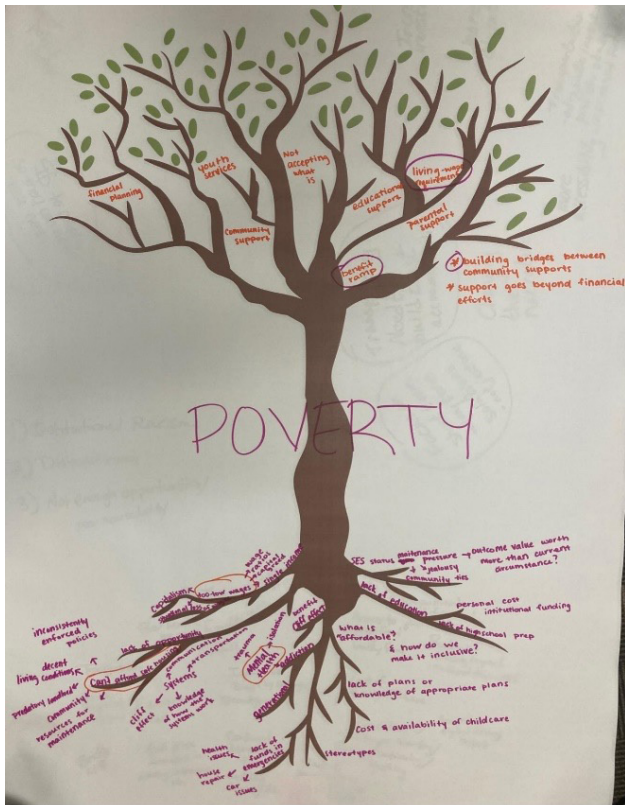
Solutions: Financial planning; Youth services; Community support; Not accepting what is; Educational support; Benefit ramp; Living- wages requirement; Parental support; Building bridges between community supports; Support goes beyond financial efforts

Root Causes: Can't afford safe housing; Inconsistency enforced policies; Decent living conditions; Predatory landlord; Community resources for maintenance; Lack of opportunity; Systems; Communication; Transportation; Cliff effect; Knowledge of how the systems work; Too-low wages; Capitalism; Situational loss of wages; Wage ratios; Capital greed; Single income; Mental health; Isolation; Trauma; Addiction; Benefit cliff effect; Generational; Lack of funds in emergencies; Health issues; House repair; Car issues; What is 'affordable'?; How do we make it inclusive?; Lack of plans or knowledge of appropriate plans; Cost & availability of childcare; Stereotypes; Lack of education; Lack of highschool prep; Personal cost; Institutional funding; SES status; Maintenance pressure; Jealousy; Community ties; Outcome value worth more than current circumstance?

South Omaha Tree 5: Root Causes and Solutions for Poverty
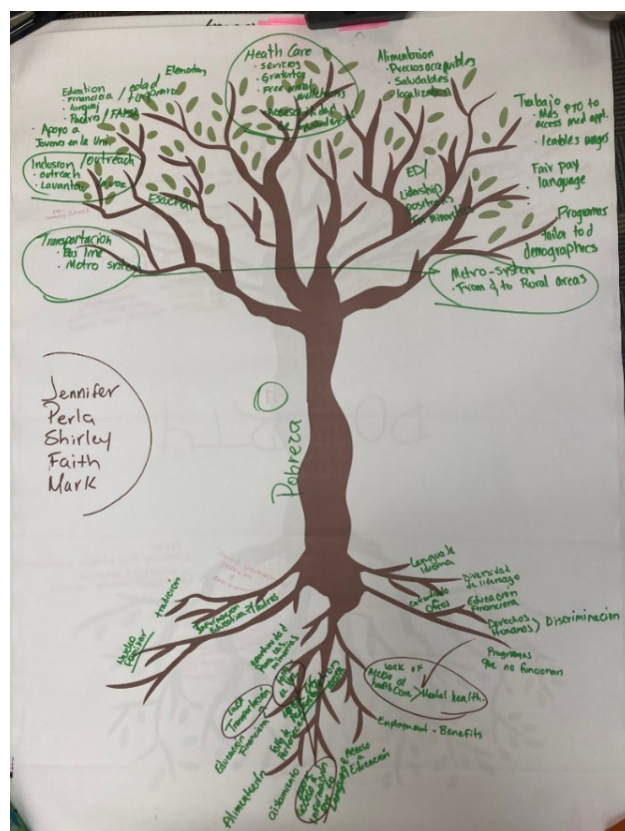
Community Engagement Feedback in Spanish

Causas de raíz: Núcleo familiar; Tradición; Información educativa p/padres; Trauma generacional; Pobreza y económico; Oportunidad para las minorías; Falta de voz; Lack of transportation; Lack of information due to language; Educación financiera; Alimentación; Lack of representation; Falta de pertenecer; Health; Aislamiento; Acceso a educación; Employment – benefits; Lack of access to healthcare; Mental health; Lengua de idioma; Diversidad de liderazgo; Educación financiera; Derechos humanos; Discriminación; Programas que no Funcionan; Entendido a otros.

Soluciones: Metro system; From and to rural areas; Transportation; Bus line; Metro system; Inclusión/outreach; Outreach; Levantar la voz; Escuchar; Apoyo a Jóvenes en la uni; Educación Financiera; Lenguaje; padres/ FAFSA; Edad temprana; Elementary; Health care; Servicios Gratuitos; Free annual wellness checks; Accesibilidad de guarderías; Alimentación Saludable; Precios; Localization; ED/ leadership; Positions for minorities; Trabajo; Mas PTO to access med appt.; Livable wages; Fair pay; Language; Programs tailor to demographics.

Community Engagement Feedback Translated into English

Root Causes: Family nucleus; Traditions; Educational information for parents; Generational trauma; Poverty and economics; Opportunity for minority groups; Lack of voice; Lack of transportation; Lack of information due to language; Financial education; Healthy food; Lack of representation; Lack of belonging; Health; Isolation; Access to education; Employment – benefits; Lack of access to healthcare; Mental health; Language; Diversity in leadership; Financial education; Human rights; Discrimination; Programs that do not work; Understand others.

Solutions: Metro system; From and to rural areas; Transportation; Bus line; Metro system; Inclusion/outreach; Outreach; Raise your voice; Listening; Support for students in the universities; Financial education; Language (barrier); Parents/FAFSA; Young age; Elementary; Health care; Free services; Free annual wellness checks; Free childcare access; Healthy food; Cost of living; Location; ED/leadership; Positions for minorities; Jobs; More PTO to access medical appointments; Livable wages; Fair pay; Language; Programs tailored to demographics.

Appendix G. Community Engagement Events Root Causes of Poverty Themes

Table 34. Root Causes of Poverty Themes in North and South Omaha		
Need	North Omaha Themes	South Omaha Themes
Education	Access to Education; Inequality and Segregation; Curriculum and Life Skills; Resources and Support Systems	Access to Education and Resources; Economic and Institutional Barriers; Parental and Community Education; Preparation and Skill Development; Social Inequities and Systemic Failures
Employment	Unequal Distribution of Employment Opportunities; Insufficient Wages and Benefits; Political and Economic Constraints; Barriers to Financial Security; Childcare and Family Support; Social and Moral Factors	Wages and Employment Inequities; Benefits and the Cliff Effect; Cost and Accessibility of Childcare; Economic Disparities and Socioeconomic Status (SES); Affordability and Cost of Living
Health	Access to Health Services; Financial Barriers to Health; Mental and Behavioral Health; Nutrition and Food Access; Social and Systemic Factors; Environmental and Community Conditions	Access and Affordability; Trauma and Mental Health; Disparities in Quality and Access; Basic Needs and Nutrition; Isolation and Belonging; Systemic Barriers and Requirements
Housing	Systemic Inequality and Discrimination; Affordable Housing Access and Availability; Homeownership Barriers; Gentrification and Development Pressures; Policy and Legislative Failures; Zoning and Regulatory Issues	Systemic Inequalities and Historical Practices; Affordability and Rising Costs; Housing Conditions and Standards; Policy and Enforcement Issues; Social and Community Dimensions
Safety	Reentry and Reintegration Challenges; Impact of Incarceration on Mental Health and Social Well-being; Environmental and Safety Issues in Communities; Systemic Issues and Injustice	Systemic Inequalities and Mistrust; Human Rights and Protection; Violence and Abuse; Security and Safety

Transportation	Inequitable Transportation Access; Access to Employment; Safety and Reliability of Public Transportation; Time and Scheduling Challenges	Insufficient Infrastructure; Connectivity and Accessibility; Distance and Reach; Information and Language Barriers
Other	Systemic Inequality and Discrimination; Social and Economic Mobility Barriers; Political and Policy Failures; Capitalism and Economic Structures; Access to Resources and Information; Short-Term Solutions and Lack of Long-Term Planning; Recidivism and the Cycle of Incarceration	Structural and Systemic Barriers; Discrimination and Inequity; Cultural and Social Dynamics; Economic and Workforce Challenges; Immigration and Language Barriers; Leadership and Representation; Connectivity and Social Isolation

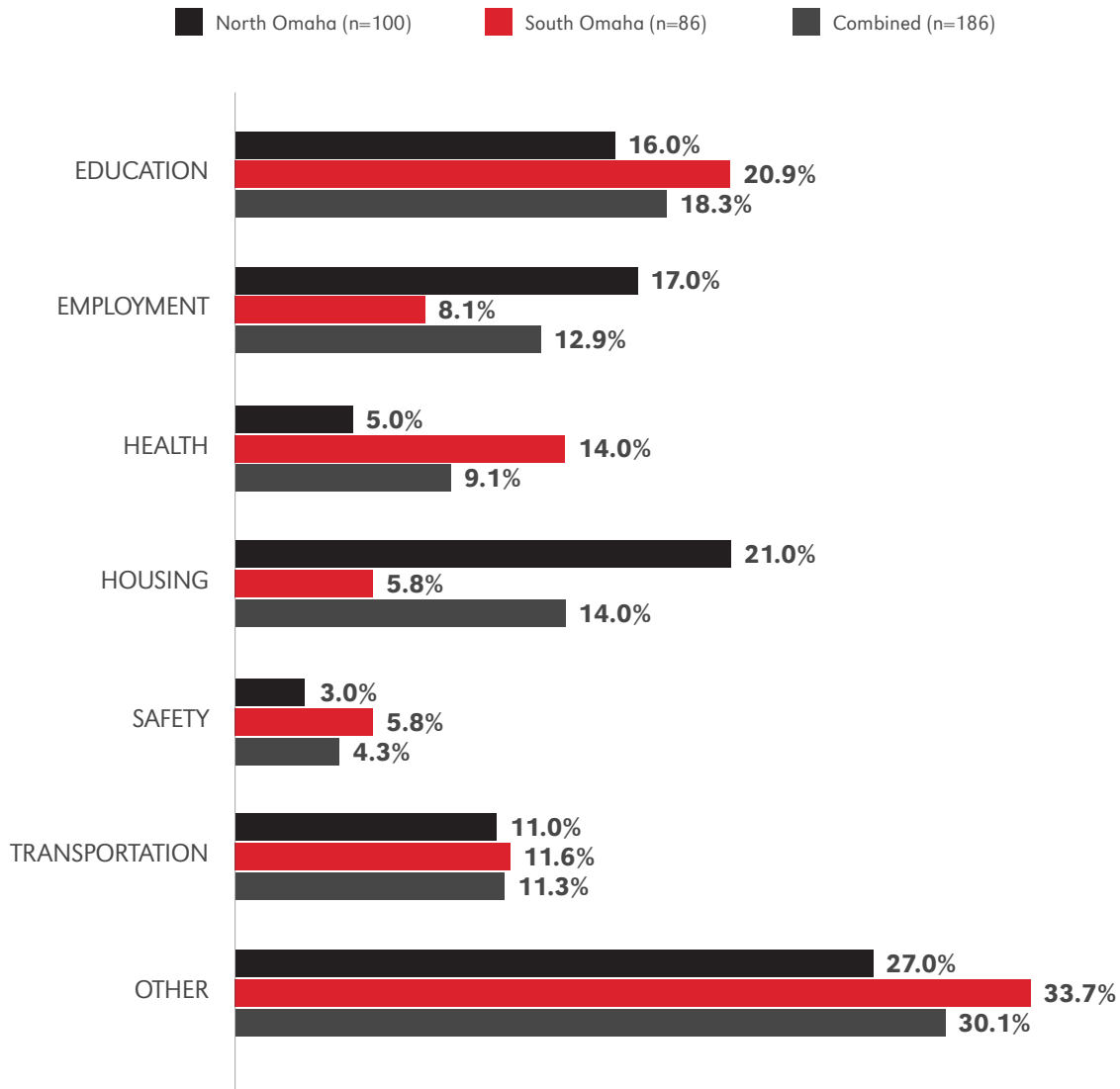# Appendix H. Community Engagement Events Solutions to Poverty Themes

Table 35. Solutions to Poverty Themes in North and South Omaha		
Need	North Omaha Themes	South Omaha Themes
Education	Access and Affordability in Education; Support for Non-Traditional and Underrepresented Students; Quality Education and Youth Services; Financial Education and Literacy; Support for Educational Infrastructure and Funding; Opportunity and Equal Access	Access and Inclusivity in Education; Financial Education and Planning; Curriculum and Program Modernization; Community and Family Engagement; Technological Literacy and Workforce Preparation
Employment	Workforce Support and Employment Opportunities; Fair and Livable Wages; Flexible Work Schedules and Better Work-Life Balance; Social Support and Infrastructure; Economic and Community Development; Equity and Inclusivity	Fair Wages and Economic Equity; Workplace Benefits and Flexibility; Workforce Development and Inclusivity; Community and Corporate Engagement
Health	Health and Community Support Services; Workplace Reform and Work-Life Balance; Maternal and Child Health; Healthcare Equity and Education	Accessible Healthcare and Wellness; Flexibility and Inclusivity in Services; Basic Needs and Financial Support; Childcare Accessibility; Human Dignity and Rights
Housing	Affordable Housing and Housing Access; Employment and Economic Empowerment; Supportive Services and Accessibility; Community and Infrastructure Development	Infrastructure and Urban Development; Environmental and Public Space Enhancement; Economic Investment and Growth
Safety	Community Building; Affordable Safe Housing; Outreach and Engagement	Safety and Security; Infrastructure for Safety and Well-being; Crisis and Community Support
Transportation	Improved Transportation Access; Accessible and Affordable Transit; Sustainable Transit Infrastructure	Public Transportation and Accessibility; Expansion and Service Enhancement; Reframing the Narrative Around Public Transit; Investment in Transportation Infrastructure

Other	Increased Government Support & Funding; Government Transparency & Accountability; Political Will & Advocacy; Community-Centered Leadership & Decision-Making; Inclusive & Holistic Approaches; Civic Engagement & Political Participation	Laws and Legal Framework; Program Accessibility and Support; Cultural Competence and Inclusivity; Community Engagement and Support; Transparency, Accountability, and Trust; Holistic and Sustainable Approaches; Focus on Solutions and Political Change; Support Systems and Resources

Appendix I. Community Engagement Events Solutions to Poverty Across Need Domains

FIGURE 14:
SOLUTIONS TO POVERTY ACROSS NEED DOMAINS BY ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

■ North Omaha (n=100) ■ South Omaha (n=86) ■ Combined (n=186)

EDUCATION
- 16.0%
- 20.9%
- 18.3%

EMPLOYMENT
- 17.0%
- 8.1%
- 12.9%

HEALTH
- 5.0%
- 14.0%
- 9.1%

HOUSING
- 21.0%
- 5.8%
- 14.0%

SAFETY
- 3.0%
- 5.8%
- 4.3%

TRANSPORTATION
- 11.0%
- 11.6%
- 11.3%

OTHER
- 27.0%
- 33.7%
- 30.1%

Appendix J. Community Survey for Omaha Poverty Elimination Action Plan

I've invited you to fill out a form:

Community Survey

Thank you for your interest in completing this survey. It should take about ten minutes.

The Nebraska Legislature passed LB 840, which requires Omaha to establish a Poverty Elimination Action Plan. Faculty in UNO's College of Public Affairs and Community Service and the City of Omaha Human Rights & Relations Department are facilitating this work.

We are gathering community input through this survey to inform the Poverty Elimination Action Plan. **In submitting this survey, you are agreeing to allow us to use direct and indirect quotes. Your name and identifying information will never be made public.**

How does poverty impact you and/or your community?

If you had to focus all of your resources to eliminate poverty in one of the following areas, which would you choose? Select two maximum.

- [ ] Education
- [ ] Employment
- [ ] Food Security
- [ ] Health Care
- [ ] Housing
- [ ] Transportation
- [ ] Other

What needs do you see in the community that current efforts do not adequately address?

What do you believe is the best solution to alleviate those needs?

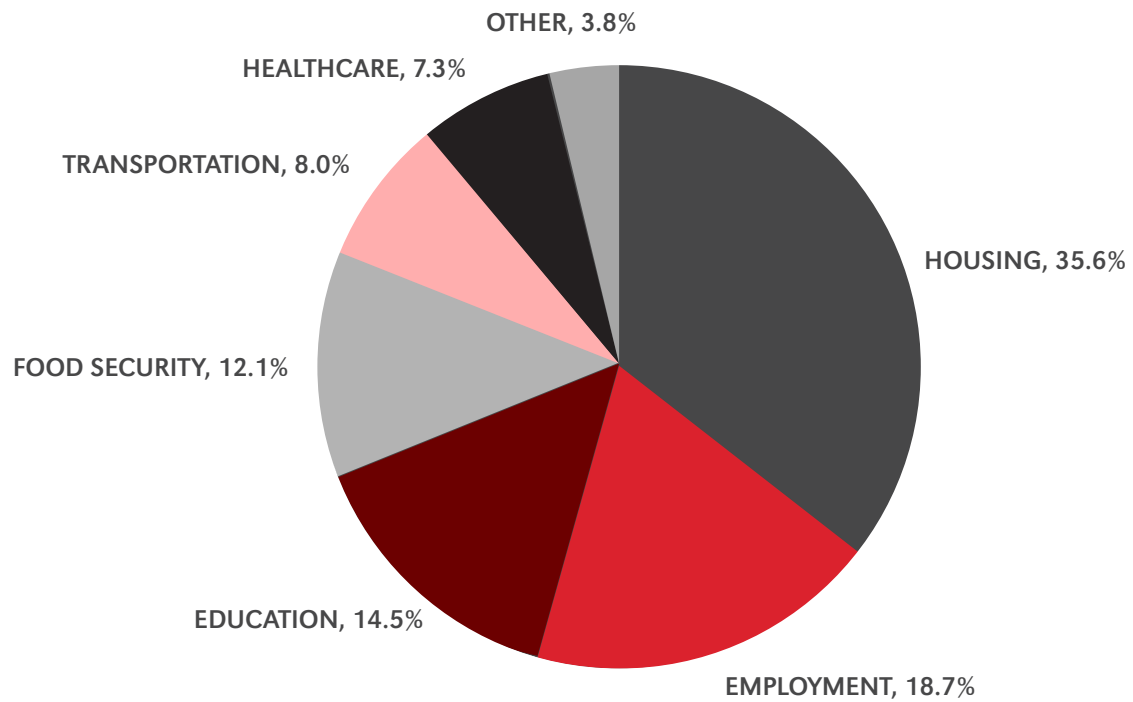Do you consider yourself someone directly impacted by poverty during your lifetime?

◯ Yes   ◯ No

Appendix K. Community Survey Respondents' Background Characteristics

Table 36. Background Characteristics of Community Survey Respondents (n=157)		
Categories	Response Type	Percentage %
Lived Poverty Experience	Yes	61.1
	No	37.0
	No response	1.9
Race	American Indian or Alaska Native	1.3
	Asian	1.3
	Black or African American	28.7
	Multiracial	3.2
	Other	6.4
	White	57.3
	No response	1.9
Ethnicity	Hispanic	12.7
	Non-Hispanic	86.0
	No response	1.3
Gender	Female	62.4
	Male	33.8
	Other	.6
	Transgender	.6
	No response	2.5
Age	18-24	3.2
	25-34	18.5
	35-44	31.8
	45-54	21.0
	55-64	15.9
	+ 64	8.3
	No response	1.3
Residential Area	North	32.5
	South	7.6
	East	10.2
	West	17.8
	Midtown	17.2
	Outside city limits	5.7
	No response	5.7

Appendix L. Community Survey Recommended Solutions

FIGURE 15:
HOW COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONDENTS WOULD FOCUS POVERTY EFFORTS

OTHER, 3.8%

HEALTHCARE, 7.3%

TRANSPORTATION, 8.0%

HOUSING, 35.6%

FOOD SECURITY, 12.1%

EDUCATION, 14.5%

EMPLOYMENT, 18.7%

Appendix M. Community Survey Voices on Poverty and Its Impacts

Community survey respondents were asked, "How does poverty impact you and/or your community?" Community members responded to our survey with a variety of salient quotes on poverty and it's impact on their lives and the lives of their children. We share some of these quotes below.

"I fear that, like myself, my children will have less resources than I do when they reach my age, even if further educated. I wonder how they will afford rent or a mortgage in any area of the city, a vehicle, perhaps a student loan payment, or childcare and the expenses of a family. In Omaha, I see the revolving "land for sale" sign in vacant fields, which will almost certainly birth a luxury apartment complex or an array of 3200 sq. ft. single family homes, each on 1/4 acre of land, attainable only to those of abundant resources or low risk aversion."

"Poverty makes me unable to work."

"It makes us constantly anxious, nervous and uncertain of the future. Capitalism rules our lives."

"Poverty holds our local economy back. When some of our neighbors are unable to contribute fully to the economy due to the burdens that poverty imposes, we aren't as productive and don't flourish as a society."

"Poverty is prevalent, and hope is fleeting, so choices are made through a lens of scarcity and survival."

"Poverty has made my community ignored by Omaha police, the mayor, the fire department, and overworks the homeless services."

"Poverty impacts our community by creating pockets of people & neighborhoods that do not have enough social capital to be listened to by elected officials. We see poverty, crime & despair in communities where some of our most brilliant residents live."

"There are people in our neighborhood that struggle with access to good, healthy food for their children. People who have to work long hours and multiple jobs to provide."

"No assistance for people that don't make enough to cover expenses but are being told they make too much."

Appendix N. Housing Affordability Action Plan (HAAP Progress Update

Housing Affordability Action Plan (HAAP)
Progress Update

OMAHA
HOUSING AFFORDABILITY ACTION PLAN

HAAP GOALS

Goals 1 + 3: Increase the Types of Housing to Meet Current and Future Needs + Ensure That All Parts of the City Have Affordable Housing

Goal 2: Preserve Existing Affordable Units

Goal 4: Foster Innovation to Lower Costs

Goal 5: Advance Housing Stability

FUNDING PROVIDED

Development & Preservation Fund

A public-private partnership with Front Porch Investments, the fund draws from $20 M in ARPA from the City and $20 M of philanthropic dollars to support the creation of affordable housing.

$33 M of $40 M awarded

+1,500 affordable units as awarded projects are constructed

Choice Neighborhoods

HUD awarded grants to the City of Omaha's partnership with OHA, Brinshore (developer), & local nonprofits to replace aging public housing with high-quality, mixed-income housing.

Choice North

253 units built | **90 units underway**

+232 net new units | $16.42 M

Choice South

92 of 763 units underway

+405 net new units | $28.90 M

Emergency Rental Assistance

Omaha received Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funds from the Treasury as part of COVID-19 economic relief efforts.

$118 M of $122 M expended

+16,564 households assisted

HOME-ARP

American Rescue Plan support for homelessness assistance & prevention

$2.5 M of $8.2 M awarded

+26 permanent supportive units for homeless households (so far)

Section 108

The City was awarded $20 M through the HUD Section 108 loan guarantee program, which allows Omaha to leverage our CDBG allocation to establish an affordable housing loan pool for projects located in the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas. Applications opened to developers in November, 2024.

NEW GRANT

Older Adult Home Modification Grant

In November 2024, the City submitted a $1.46 M Older Adult Home Modification Grant to HUD, to make home modifications and renovations to meet the needs of low-income seniors. The grant was awarded to the City in January 2025.

CDBG, HOME, & ESG Funds

CDBG, HOME, and ESG funds are allocated from HUD to City annually based on population and measures of community need. The City's fund use strategy is outlined in 5-Year Consolidated Plans. The most recently executed plan is the 2019-2023 Consolidated Plan*, during which the following was awarded:

CDBG — **$29.26 M**

SF Rehab: 2,932 units — $9.31 M

Other Community Development Activities — $19.95 M

HOME — **$16.72 M**

SF Rehab: 33 HOME units (total) — $5.66 M

SF Construction: 20 HOME units, 193 total — $3.02 M

MF Construction: 26 HOME units, 301 total — $5.34 M

MF Rehab: 25 HOME units, 237 total — $2.70 M

ESG — **$1.99 M**

792,068 beds of overnight shelter

319 people assisted with housing placements

Page 1 of 2   *2024 funds are obligated; however, reporting data is not yet complete

FEES

2010 The last time Omaha's residential building permit fees increased

90% Change in median home value since 2010: $134,300 in 2010 to $255,500 in 2023

44% Increase in inflation since 2010

Recently updated fees include:

- Watershed Management Fee, updated in 2024.*
- Arterial Street Improvement Program (ASIP) and interceptor Sewer Fees, updated in 2022.*
- Community parks fees, updated in 2016.
- Trail & boulevard fees, updated in 2011.

*These fees include a fee schedule, and the fee values increase on January 1st of each year.

TIF

TIF & Housing

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) has helped create affordable housing units. Over the last two years, the use of TIF has been approved for projects that will create the following number of units:

	2022	2023
Total Units	1,706	2,642
Affordable Units	119	413

POLICIES CHANGED

Expanded density corridors along West Center, West Dodge and West Maple, while adding 204th as a corridor. Density corridors allow **unlimited residential density within 1/4 mile of the highway.** Approved July 28, 2020.

Reduced minimum lot width and area (while increasing max building and impervious coverage) in the R5 and R6 Districts. **This change allows a smaller footprint for single-family homes.** Approved October 27, 2020.
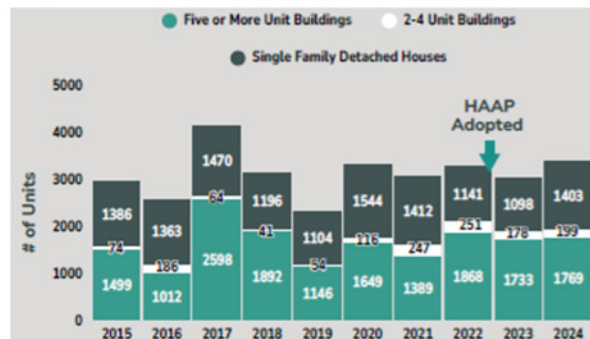
Modified the fee structure for the sewer interceptor and Arterial Street Improvement Program (ASIP), in coordination with Public Works, **to encourage density and housing affordability** by applying the fee per square foot rather than lot size. Approved February, 8, 2022.

Permitted ADUs by right in higher density districts (19.6% of residential areas), or by conditional use permit in all lower density districts. Approved March 5, 2024. In November 2024, the ADU Omaha website was launched, which includes eight pre-approved plans and a how-to guide for developing ADUs in Omaha.

BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED

Legend: Five or More Unit Buildings · 2-4 Unit Buildings · Single Family Detached Houses

HAAP Adopted

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Single Family	1499	1012	2598	1892	1146	1649	1389	1868	1733	1769
2-4 Unit	74	186	64	41	34	116	247	251	178	199
Five or More	1386	1363	1470	1196	1104	1544	1412	1141	1098	1403

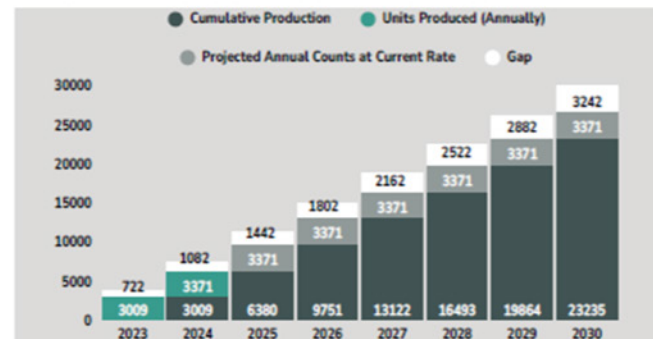### 2015-2024 Total Permits Issued

- **16,555** Units in Multifamily (5+) Buildings
- **1,410** Units in 2-4 Unit Buildings
- **13,117** Single Family Units

Middle Housing (townhome, duplex, triplex, fourplex) production has increased dramatically, from **74 units/year in 2015** to **199 units/year in 2024!**

EST. HOUSING PRODUCTION

Legend: Cumulative Production · Units Produced (Annually) · Projected Annual Counts at Current Rate · Gap

Year	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Cumulative Production	3009	3009	6380	9751	13122	16493	19864	23235
Units Produced	722	3371						
Projected			1082	1442	1802	2162	2522	2882
Gap			3371	3371	3371	3371	3371	3371
								3242

Annual units produced are on the rise.

While annual housing units produced are steadily rising, Omaha is trending short of the needed **3,731** units/year to produce 29,851 units from 2023 and 2030.

CITY PROPERTY SALES

In 2024, the City approved the sale of 50 City-owned parcels for housing construction. 37 parcels were sold for $1, and will add at least:

+12 units for households earning up to 80% of the Median Family Income
+19 units for households earning up to 120% of the Median Family Income

City of Omaha: Addendum to Poverty Elimination Action Plan

The following outlines the City of Omaha's reflection on the Poverty Elimination Action Plan and its commitments. LB 840 requires Omaha to draft a report bi-annually detailing efforts to eliminate poverty through education and job training, affordable housing, health care access, economic development, transportation and infrastructure, and social services. Based on the Poverty Elimination Action Plan the University of Nebraska at Omaha drafted, community perspectives on key areas of focus, and the City of Omaha's scope, the City is most equipped to initially focus on, and will be most impactful with, solutions in economic development, including education and job training. Many City programs already exist to promote economic development, so refining those programs and emphasizing collaboration across educational institutions, non-profits and other government bodies will be a central focal point for Omaha in 2025-2026. The greatest opportunity identified through this effort is affordable housing. While the City has efforts to maintain and create more affordable housing, the efforts do not keep pace with current or future needs, and community members emphasized this reality in feedback. Omaha will focus in that space initially as well.

I. 2024-2025 Goals

These are the City of Omaha goals for 2025-2026:

Education and Job Training

1. Early Childhood: Research the feasibility, costs, and benefits of full-time universal prekindergarten programs, with before and aftercare free of charge.

2. K-12 Trade Preparation. Collaborate with public schools, local funders and private industry to expand quality job preparation for the trades. We will focus on strengthening the pipeline from Omaha Public Schools to Metropolitan Community College, focusing on dual enrollment, and determining where funding is lacking.

3. Higher Education. Partner with community colleges, universities, the Omaha Chamber of Commerce, and local employers to align educational programs with workforce needs, focusing on developing degrees and micro-credentials that target high-demand skills and address labor shortages in the Omaha job market. Create a City of Omaha strategy regarding supporting lifelong learning for continued economic growth, through opportunities such as micro-credentials, degrees and apprenticeships.

4. Adult Education. Enhance United Way 211, a centralized resource hub to connect residents with adult learning and career training opportunities. Actively promote these resources through community outreach and targeted communication strategies to underserved communities. United Way 211 hosts a centralized listing of services in housing, health, food, transportation, financial assistance, education, employment, mental health, government and more. The City of Omaha will work with United Way to expand the resources highlighted through 211, with a focus on adult education and career training. Heartland Workforce Solutions currently has north and south Omaha locations and offers many services related to adult education and beyond. We will continue to partner with Heartland Workforce Solutions to increase visibility of their services and build on current services and opportunities.

5. Expand Workforce Development Programs. Connect jobseekers with employers in highdemand sectors by providing industry-specific training and job placement services. We will invite collaboration between the Mayor's Office, City of Omaha, Chambers of Commerce and Heartland Workforce Solutions. We will propose adopting and iterating a collaboration between Heartland Workforce Solutions and the Greater Omaha Chamber to establish a career pipeline, encompassing curriculum development for training, recruiting and hiring for new businesses in Omaha.

Affordable Housing

1. Tax Increment Financing. Continue to use TIF strategically to create affordable housing opportunities in coordination with efforts to enhance transportation, employment opportunities, and access to services.

2. Land Bank. Support and coordinate with the Omaha Municipal Land Bank (OMLB). We will evaluate how to improve support and coordination and implement logical solutions.

3. City-owned Lots. Continue selling City-owned lots for re-development.

4. Accessory Dwelling Units. Continue to publicize ordinances allowing for accessory dwelling units to expand the City's inventory of affordable housing.

5. Zoning. Implement zoning changes consistent with the City of Omaha Housing Affordability Action Plan (HAAP), which recommends modification of Zoning Ordinances to provide additional residential use types, including: triplexes, quadplexes, and smaller scale multifamily. The City will be doing this incrementally as it updates the Master Plan, between now and 2027.

6. Housing Rehabilitation. Continue attention to rehabilitating existing affordable housing to maintain the affordable housing inventory and save money as compared to new construction.

7. Transit-Oriented Development. Align new development, affordable housing and essential services to existing and planned public transportation. Omaha is already focusing here within the HAAP and will renew that focus with the Streetcar revenue.

8. Home Ownership. Support pathways to home ownership such as financial planning and preparation, pre-home purchase education and post purchase education.

9. Addressing Homelessness. The City of Omaha will continue to focus on supporting residents experiencing homelessness through improved coordination, collaboration, and access to services and housing. Omaha is currently testing a direct-to-housing encampment response model, in collaboration with community partners, which is intended to directly transition individuals from encampments into stable housing. The City will apply lessons learned from this project and continue integration of best practices to already existing procedures, ensuring all residents experiencing homelessness are thoughtfully and appropriately connected with life-saving services and housing opportunities.

Additional Community Concerns

1. Community Engagement. In efforts to eliminate poverty, the City will focus on improving community engagement and coordination between government, non-profits, and the private sector. Partnerships will be key to progress. The City will (1) create a Mayor's Advisory Task Force for the Poverty Elimination Action Plan, by requesting applications and selecting community members with experience in different focal areas of LB840 and people with lived experiences of poverty to inform the direction of the Plan, (2) post the report publicly on the Human Rights & Relations Department website and (3) hold community meetings twice a year to report on progress and receive feedback.

II. 2026-2027 Goals

The City of Omaha will continue to advance goals initiated in 2025-2026 and add focus on the following goals in 2026-2027.

Education and Job Training

1. Free or Subsidized Childcare/Pre-School. The City will look for opportunities to expand access to full-time free or subsidized childcare and pre-school programs to support working parents' full participation in the workforce.

Economic Development

1. Invest in Public-Private Partnerships. Provide grants, tax incentives, and low-interest loans to attract businesses and support workforce training programs. By prioritizing projects that benefit low-income communities, Omaha can ensure inclusive economic growth and foster a thriving business environment. Omaha will continue to explore other opportunities in this realm.

Transportation and Infrastructure

1. Microtransit. Partner with Metro Transit to support their microtransit pilot program.

2. State Support for Public Transit. Coordinate with the State Legislature to increase state support for public transit in Omaha to bolster increased local investments.

Additional Considerations

1. Implement Local EITC Program. The City will explore the benefits and costs of providing a 5% match to recipients of the federal EITC.

2. EITC for Taxpayers with ITIN: Assess how much impact this would have on the families and whether it would pull them out of poverty.