Mapping Community-Based Organizations in
Summit County, Ohio

by

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Executive Summary
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Background and Research Questions
Improving local neighborhoods used to mean identifying and combating local problems. Today, a new approach is being used by a number of foundations, public officials and activists to build the capacity of local communities. Based on asset-building theory, these models target the institutional strengths of local areas to promote the economic and social viability of the community. Because nonprofit and community-based groups are often viewed as neighborhood assets, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation asked the Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy (CNP) at the Urban Institute to analyze the size, scope and spatial dimensions of the nonprofit sector in Summit County, Ohio, with special attention to the central city of Akron.

Three key questions guide this research:
• What types of community-based organizations are located in Summit County?
• Are these organizations evenly distributed across the county or are some areas underserved?
• Is there a spatial mismatch between the location of community-based groups and the needs of the most disadvantaged residents of Summit County?

To address these questions, CNP built a database of community-based nonprofit organizations in Summit County and supplemented it with information on for-profit firms, public and private schools, libraries, and other public institutions in the community. Socioeconomic information from the U.S. Bureau of the Census was also compiled. Together, these data provide the Knight Foundation with important insights into potential assets and gaps for building the capacity of communities in Summit County. The data can be used by the Foundation for planning its grantmaking strategies and working with the community to identify and prioritize local needs.

Key Findings
Residents of Summit County generally are satisfied with their community. In a recent survey, 71 percent called it an “excellent” or “good” place to live. The county fares well on several socioeconomic measures, such as median household income and educational attainment,
when compared to the State of Ohio and national norms, and the poverty rate is lower in Summit County than in the state or nation as a whole. But these aggregated figures obscure the deep pockets of poverty that disproportionately impact African Americans in the county. The substantial concentration of social and economic need and its effect on specific groups of people in Summit County are key factors to consider in developing a strategy to build community assets and promote positive change.

**Characteristics of the nonprofit sector**

Because nonprofit organizations serve the twin functions of delivering services and providing voice for community concerns, they can be key players in building the capacity of local areas. Working from an asset model, CNP analyzed the characteristics of nonprofits in Summit County. The findings reveal a small but financially healthy sector that can underpin change.

- **The nonprofit sector in Summit County is large and geographically dense.** There are 1,284 community-based organizations in Summit County. The majority of the groups (741) are faith-based, with the remaining 543 organizations secular in nature. The size of the nonprofit sector in Summit County is relatively large when compared to its population. There are approximately 14 groups for every 10,000 residents, compared to eight nonprofits per 10,000 persons nationally. If religious organizations are added, the density increases to approximately 24 nonprofits for every 10,000 Summit County residents.

- **Two-thirds of the nonprofits in Summit County operate in one of the Foundation’s seven program areas.** The Foundation’s seven program areas cover a wide range of activities, namely arts and culture, education, children and social welfare services, community development, literacy, citizenship, and homelessness. Of the 543 nonprofit groups in Summit County, 351 groups (or two-thirds of the total) offered services in one of these targeted areas.

- **Among the Foundation’s seven program areas, the three most common types of services in Summit County are arts and culture, education, and child-related and social welfare.** More than 100 groups offered arts and cultural programs as their primary service activity. Education-related organizations are also relatively numerous. Ninety-two organizations cover a range of services including preschool, primary and secondary education, colleges, and universities. Children and social welfare services is the third largest program-related group in the county. One in four (87 groups) fit this category. It includes a wide array of groups that offer services such as Boys and Girls Clubs, job training, food banks, and women’s centers. Together, these three program areas—arts and culture, education, and children and social welfare services—account for more than 80 percent of nonprofits in Summit County.

- **There are far fewer nonprofits in Summit County that focus primarily on the Foundation’s other program areas.** Forty-one organizations in the county were identified as primarily engaging in community development activities, such as public housing facilities, housing development, housing rehabilitation, and neighborhood
improvement. Seven organizations focused on literacy issues, while another seven groups primarily engaged in building citizenship. Only four organizations indicated their primary mission was to serve the homeless population.

- **Nonprofits in Summit County tend to operate on relatively small budgets.** Although the nonprofit sector in Summit County is fairly large, the typical nonprofit in the county operates on a fairly small budget. Of those reporting financial information to the IRS in 1998, median revenues were roughly $145,000 and median expenditures were $120,000. Median assets for these organizations were $146,000.

- **The typical community-based organization that fits into the Foundation’s program categories is smaller—but fiscally stronger—than other nonprofits in Summit County.** The budgets of nonprofit groups that operate in the Foundation’s seven program areas were slightly smaller than other types of nonprofits in Summit County. Median revenues for program-related groups, for example, were $140,000, compared to $163,000 for the other nonprofits in the county. Despite their smaller size, nonprofits that engage in activities that the Foundation supports tend to be fiscally healthier than other groups in Summit County. Roughly 72 percent of groups in the seven program areas, compared with 68 percent of the remainder of the community-based sector, reported positive balance sheets in which revenues exceeded expenses at the close of 1998. This finding suggests that groups in the program areas may be slightly better positioned to withstand unexpected shocks in their funding streams than other nonprofits in the county.

**Spatial patterns of community-based organizations in Summit County**

The ability of nonprofits to positively impact and improve local communities is linked in part to their ability to reach local residents. Access to residents comes in many forms: via websites, through mobile units, and at fixed locations. Because most nonprofits provide programs at fixed locations, these sites need to be known by residents and within a reasonable distance to travel. The spatial distribution of nonprofits in Summit County vis-à-vis local socioeconomic conditions showed the following patterns.

- **Secular nonprofits are more likely than congregations to be sited in low-income neighborhoods.** Community-based organizations are distributed throughout Summit County, although faith-based groups are more evenly dispersed. While congregations are spread widely across Summit County, secular nonprofit providers are more frequently located in the central city, which has a large concentration of high poverty areas. The wider geographic distribution of faith-related organizations is not surprising given that many congregations locate in areas that are easily accessible to their members.

- **Groups that are of primary interest to the Foundation are more likely than other nonprofits to be sited where the need in Summit County is greatest.** More than one in three program-related nonprofits are located in areas of high poverty, compared with about one in five of the remaining organizations. This finding reveals the rich array of institutions that can be drawn upon by public officials, grantmakers and local residents to
build community capacity in many of the highly distressed neighborhoods of Summit County.

- **Arts and cultural organizations are distributed fairly evenly across income areas in Summit County.** Roughly 70 percent of arts-related groups are located in high or moderate income neighborhoods with the remaining 30 percent in lower income areas. The locational choices of these groups reinforce the notion that not all nonprofits serve the poor and are driven in part by the desire of nonprofits to be near probable consumers.

- **Three-fourths of nonprofit educational providers are located in moderate and high income areas.** The groups that are located in lower income areas tend to provide higher education (such as the University of Akron), scholarship funds, or administrative and planning services. For the most part, nonprofit preschools, and primary and secondary school are absent from lower income neighborhoods.

- **Organizations that target their services to lower-income residents tend to cluster in the poorest areas of Summit County.** More than half (56 percent) of community-based groups that primarily focus on child-related and social welfare programs are located in high poverty areas near downtown Akron. More than half of the child-related and social welfare groups and community development organizations are sited in high poverty neighborhoods. Although none of the organizations that primarily target services to the homeless population are located directly in high poverty areas, several are sited in neighborhoods that abut areas of high poverty.

- **Nonprofits that promote citizenship are generally located in downtown Akron.** Among the program areas, citizenship groups are the most likely to be sited in downtown Akron. The tendency of citizenship nonprofits to locate in downtown neighborhoods may reflect the availability of space or their desire to be in close proximity to similar organizations.

**Conclusion**

Summit County has a moderate level of poverty vis-à-vis national and state figures, yet its poor residents are isolated in a handful of high poverty neighborhoods. The good economic times that many Summit County residents enjoy are absent from these areas. This social and economic disparity, however, provides an impetus to use nonprofit organizations to improve community conditions. Indeed, policy officials and foundations may turn to the extensive array of nonprofits that are sited in low-income neighborhoods, particularly in Akron, to develop local strategies to address community needs. While nonprofits are sited in nearly every area of Summit County, the groups that fit into the Foundation’s seven program areas are significantly more likely to be located in high poverty neighborhoods than are other groups. Moreover, despite their relatively small size, program-related nonprofits are fiscally stronger than other groups in Summit County. These findings suggest that the organizational infrastructure to promote social and economic growth in distressed neighborhoods is extensive and reasonably stable.
Understanding the geographic distribution of nonprofits is a helpful starting point for developing a community building strategy. It provides a basis for identifying the potential resources that exist in the community and their geographic proximity to local needs. Additional information is needed, however, on the program content and organizational structure of these community-based groups to understand more fully their ability to address community needs. The exploration of these issues and further dialogue with community residents can help formulate the next steps in a community building strategy for Akron and Summit County.

A copy of the full report is available by contacting The Knight Foundation (2 South Biscayne Boulevard, Miami, FL 33131) or the authors at the Urban Institute (2100 M Street NW, Washington, DC 20037).
Background

To better understand the 26 communities in which it makes local grants, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation established the Community Indicators Project to document the social and economic health of these communities and asked the Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy (CNP) to identify the nonprofit and other community-based organizations in four communities and to analyze their resources. These communities include Summit County (Akron), OH; Bibb County (Macon), GA; Lake County (Gary), IN; and Philadelphia County (Philadelphia), PA. The purpose of this research is to provide the Foundation with information on the size, scope, and spatial dimensions of the nonprofit sectors in these areas to identify the locally based assets of each community and the possible gaps in service need.

This report presents the findings of the organizational and spatial analysis of community-based groups in Summit County, Ohio. The report consists of several components. First, it explores the environmental conditions of Summit County. Second, it analyzes the number and finances of community-based organizations in the county. Finally, groups are categorized by the Foundation’s seven program areas, and the locations of these organizations are viewed vis-à-vis the socioeconomic needs of Summit County.

The report is guided by three research questions:

- What are the community-based resources in Summit County?
- Are community-based organizations evenly distributed across the county, or are some areas underserved?
- Is there a spatial mismatch between the location of community-based groups and the needs of the most disadvantaged residents of Summit County?
The findings of this report, coupled with the Organizational Database of Selected Counties,\(^1\) provide the Foundation with detailed information on potential assets and gaps in community-based programs in Summit County. This information can be used by the Foundation for planning its grantmaking strategies and for working with the community to identify and prioritize local needs.

**The Socioeconomic Conditions of Summit County**

Community residents generally give Summit County very high ratings. In a recent survey, 71 percent of Akron residents called it an “excellent” or “good” place to live (Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1999). Nearly 60 percent have lived in the county for more than 20 years, and most people (77 percent) expect to stay for the next five years. Most Akron residents believe they can have a positive effect on their community, and a majority (57 percent) did volunteer work for a community-based organization in the last year.

Socioeconomic indicators tend to support this positive view of the county (see table 1). For example, the median household income in Summit County ($36,301) is roughly 7 percent higher than comparable measures for the state of Ohio ($33,958) and the nation ($34,076). Educational attainment also tends to be higher. In 1990, roughly 78 percent of Summit County residents, age 25 or older, had received a high school diploma, compared with 76 percent in the state and 75 percent in the nation. Nearly 20 percent of Summit County residents had a college degree—about the same share as the nation and higher than the state (17 percent).

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\(^1\) A related component of this project was the development of a database of community-based organizations, primary and secondary schools, and selected for-profit and public institutions in the four pilot communities. The sources and methodology used to construct the database are provided in Appendix A.
Other measures of health and well-being further illustrate that Summit County fares well compared to state and national norms. The percentage of occupied housing units in the county (95 percent), for example, exceeds both the state (94 percent) and national (90 percent) levels. The county’s infant mortality rate (7.2 deaths per 1,000 births) was below state (8.4 per 1,000) and national (7.3 per 1,000) levels, and the county’s poverty rate also was lower than the national average. In 1995, Summit County had a poverty rate of 11.3 percent compared with 13.8 percent for the nation. Child poverty in the county (18.8 percent) was slightly below the national average (19.0 percent). Taken together, these indicators suggest that Summit County is a strong and healthy community.

Table 1. Socioeconomic and Health Indicators for Summit County, the State of Ohio, and the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socioeconomic/Health</th>
<th>Summit County</th>
<th>Ohio</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income (1995)</td>
<td>$36,301</td>
<td>$33,958</td>
<td>$34,076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% High School Graduates (1990)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% College Graduates* (1990)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Occupied Housing Units (1990)</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant Mortality Rate (1996)</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Living in Poverty (1995)</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Children in Poverty (1995)</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Bachelor’s degree or higher.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Hidden within these figures, however, are deep pockets of social and economic need. Only by looking beneath these aggregate statistics at smaller geographic areas does a picture of community strengths and disadvantages become more apparent. For example, nearly one-quarter of the census tracts in Summit County (29 of 121 tracts) had poverty rates of 30 percent or more—a level that is roughly three times the county average. As map 1 illustrates,
these high poverty areas tend to be concentrated in the central part of Akron. Only a few high poverty tracts are scattered in other parts of the county. What is more, these high poverty neighborhoods account for a sizeable portion of the poverty population. Roughly 25,000 of the 61,000 poor people in Summit County in 1990 lived in these high poverty areas—about 41 percent of the total poverty population.

The concentration of high poverty areas in Summit County most directly affects the African American population. African Americans live in relatively few parts of the county. They are mostly clustered in city neighborhoods (see map 2). In 1990, more than four of every five black residents (83 percent) lived in 31 of the 121 census tracts in Summit County. More than half of these 31 neighborhoods (17 tracts) were high poverty areas where poverty rates were 30 percent or higher. These same census tracts have high numbers of children in poverty and many vacant and abandoned housing.

While the concentration of poverty exhibits many negative characteristics, not everyone in these high poverty neighborhoods is poor. Of the roughly 50,000 black residents living in high poverty neighborhoods in 1990, 17,500 had incomes below poverty. In stark contrast, the outlying areas of Summit County are predominantly white and have lower rates of poverty compared with the urban core of Akron.

The Community-Based Organizations in Summit County

The geographic concentration of poverty and its disproportionate effect on African Americans in Summit County highlight the need to study local neighborhoods and take stock of the community-based assets that can be used to leverage change. Nonprofit organizations, both secular and faith-based, are often seen as the anchor or glue to community life and are an important resource for building and strengthening the capacity of local areas. Developing
a clearer understanding of the locally based resources in the county is a first-step in determining how to target grantmaking activities to address local needs. Four key factors stand out from the analysis of nonprofit groups in Summit County, Ohio.

**The nonprofit sector in Summit County is large and geographically dense.**

Counting both secular and faith-based organizations, there are 1,284 community-based organizations in Summit County. The majority of the groups (741) are religious congregations and faith-based programs, with the remaining 543 organizations secular in nature. Although religious organizations make up the majority of community-based groups in Akron, very little is known about their social ministry programs. Unlike the secular nonprofit organizations, religious congregations are not required to report their community activities to the Internal Revenue Service (or any other governmental agency), and very few do so. This leaves a void in determining what they do, who they serve, or the level of financial support used to sustain these program activities. As a result, most information about the nonprofit sector in Akron (and other communities) relates to secular nonprofit groups. While there is great interest among many policymakers to explore new partnerships with the faith community, there is little empirical evidence to understand how these groups currently complement, substitute, or supplement what is being done by other community-based organizations or government agencies.

Looking only at the secular nonprofit organizations in Summit County, they are quite numerous relative to the size of the population. In fact, the density of secular nonprofit organizations in Summit County is nearly 75 percent greater than the national average (see Stevenson et al., 1997). In Summit County, there were approximately 14 groups for every 10,000 residents, compared with eight nonprofits per 10,000 persons nationally. If religious
organizations are added, the density increases to approximately 24 community-based organizations for every 10,000 residents in Summit County.

Two-thirds of the 501(c)3 groups in Summit County operate in one of the Foundation’s seven program areas. The Foundation’s seven program areas cover a wide range of activities, namely arts and culture, education, children and social welfare services, community development, literacy, citizenship, and homelessness. Of the 543 nonprofit groups in Summit County, 351 groups (or two-thirds of the total) offered services in one of these targeted areas.

Arts and culture was the program area that had the most nonprofits (see table 2). More than 100 groups offered arts and cultural programs as their primary service activity. Education was the second most frequent service area (92 organizations), followed by children and social welfare services (87 groups). Education includes the full range of age- and grade-level programs, such as preschools, private primary and secondary schools, and colleges and universities. Children and social welfare services encompass a wide range of programs, such as Boys and Girls Clubs, neighborhood centers, job training initiatives, senior citizen centers, meals on wheels, food banks, and more. Together, these three program areas—arts and culture, education, and children and social welfare services—account for more than four of every five nonprofit organizations in Summit County.

The remaining four program areas had far fewer organizations engaged in these services. Forty-one organizations were identified as primarily engaging in community development activities, such as public housing facilities, housing development, housing rehabilitation, homeowners and tenants associations, cooperatives, community coalitions, business and industry councils, economic development and neighborhood improvement.
Seven organizations focused on literacy issues and another seven groups primarily engaged in building citizenship. Four organizations provided direct services to the homeless. It is possible (even probable) that some of these activities are offered as components of the overall program mix of other community-based groups. Boys and Girls Clubs, for example, may help build citizenship skills, and a YMCA may provide a literacy program for recent immigrants. What these data show, however, is that only a handful of community-based groups view activities such as literacy, citizenship, and services for the homeless as their primary mission.

Table 2. Distribution of Nonprofit Organizations by Knight Foundation's Program Categories in Summit County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Area</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Culture</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children and Social Welfare</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Organizational Database of Selected Communities, prepared for the Knight Foundation, August 2000.

Nonprofits in Summit County tend to operate on relatively small budgets.

Although the density of nonprofit organizations in Summit County is relatively high, the typical nonprofit in the community operates on a fairly small budget. Of those reporting financial information to the IRS in 1998,2 median revenues were roughly $145,000 and median expenditures were $120,000. Median assets for these organizations were $146,000.

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2 Roughly one-third of community-based organizations (441 groups) in Summit County reported financial information on Forms 990 to the Internal Revenue Service in 1998.
Systematic, local area studies are just beginning to emerge in the literature, so there are limited data available for comparative purposes. A study of community-based organizations in Washington, D.C., shows that nonprofit organizations in the nation’s capital were roughly two to three times larger than those in Summit County (see De Vita et al., 2000). The typical nonprofit in Washington, D.C., reported median revenues of $408,000, expenses of $365,000, and assets of $251,000 in 1996.

The smaller size of nonprofit groups in Summit County may reflect the local orientation of the sector. Indeed, many of the largest nonprofit organizations in the country have placed their headquarters in large urban centers such as Washington, D.C., New York, and Chicago. Such groups often do not directly address the needs of local residents but rather engage in membership activities, lobbying, or advocacy work. In contrast, smaller urban areas, such as Akron in Summit County, tend to have a nonprofit sector that is more focused on the social and economic needs of local residents.

The typical community-based organization that fits into the Foundation’s program categories is smaller than other nonprofits in Summit County. The median revenues and expenditures of groups that comprise the Foundation’s program categories were $140,000 and $123,000, respectively, in 1998. This is somewhat smaller than comparable revenue and expenditure levels for the remainder of the nonprofit sector, which were $163,000 and $119,000.

Despite their smaller size, community-based groups that engage in activities that the Foundation supports tend to be fiscally healthier than other groups in Summit County. Roughly 72 percent of groups in the seven program areas, compared with 68 percent of the
remainder of the community-based sector, reported positive balance sheets in which revenues exceeded expenses at the close of 1998.

Looking at the net income of these organizations (that is, the difference between revenues and expenditures), the groups that primarily provide services in the Foundation’s program areas tend to have a somewhat larger cushion in their budgets than community-based organizations that provide other types of services. Median net income for the Foundation’s program-related areas was 8 percent of total revenues compared with 5 percent for other nonprofits. This finding suggests that organizations in the programs areas may be slightly more effective than other nonprofits in withstanding shifts in funding. We were unable, however, to determine if the relatively stronger fiscal position of program-related nonprofits is because of the type of services provided or the generally good economic climate of the late 1990s.

Within the Foundation’s seven areas of interest, the budgets of the organizations that provide these services vary widely. Groups that primarily provide services to help the homeless have the highest median revenues ($640,000) and expenditures ($556,000), see table 3. Services such as homeless shelters or soup kitchens often have high fixed costs for buildings, equipment, and maintenance of these programs. It is not surprising, therefore, that this type of service provider would report relatively high revenues and expenditures to operate. In addition to the three community-based groups that primarily provide services to the homeless in Summit County, religious congregations also are likely to be active in this service area. Studies in other localities show that religious congregations often supply emergency services, such as food, shelter, and clothing, to their communities (De Vita et al.,

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3 The groups that predominately focus on the issue of homeless and reported financial information to the IRS in 1998 include the Battered Women’s Shelter, the Housing Network, and the United States Catholic Conference.
If data were available on the activities of religious congregations in Summit County, a fuller picture of this service area might be provided.

Literacy groups also have substantial budgets, with median revenues and expenditures of over $500,000. This category contains several public libraries that provide services to the general public, as well as special literacy programs.

Within the seven program areas, education organizations report the lowest average revenues and expenditures in Summit County. Median revenues in 1998 were roughly $47,000 and expenses were $32,000. Although higher education institutions are included in this category, it also contains many parent-teacher associations that operate on small budgets.

### Table 3. Financial Characteristics of Community-Based Organizations in Summit County in 1998, by the Foundation’s Program Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Area</th>
<th>Median Revenues</th>
<th>Median Expenditures</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td>$640,000</td>
<td>$556,000</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>521,000</td>
<td>523,000</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children and Social Welfare</td>
<td>337,000</td>
<td>311,000</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development</td>
<td>180,000</td>
<td>166,000</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Culture</td>
<td>119,000</td>
<td>97,000</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>102,000</td>
<td>57,000</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>47,000</td>
<td>32,000</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All program areas</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>123,000</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Financial data are rounded to thousands of dollars.

Source: Organizational Database of Selected Communities, prepared for the Knight Foundation, August 2000.

In general, these financial data must be interpreted with caution. In some program areas, financial data were available for only a small proportion of groups that offer this service. Missing data could obscure the “true” financial base of the program area. In other program areas, such as libraries, the data may reflect the entire budget of the organization.
rather than any specific program. Despite these caveats, the data provide a broad brush picture of the potential resources for building community capacity.

**Findings of the Spatial Analysis of Community-Based Organizations in Summit County**

Community-based organizations deliver vital services and goods to local residents. Indeed, beginning with the War on Poverty, nonprofit institutions became the preferred vehicles to supply health and human services as governments expanded and privatized their social service systems. In addition, nonprofits contribute to localities through activities that enhance or maintain community stability and build linkages between residents and their elected leaders. As problem-solving initiatives continue to devolve to local areas, many public officials and grant makers have become increasingly interested in building the capacity of these organizations.

The ability of nonprofits to positively impact and improve local communities is linked, in part, to their accessibility to local residents. Access to local residents comes in many forms. Some nonprofits now operate solely in cyberspace, through websites and the Internet. Others follow a more traditional way of reaching people, that is through direct contact, either by mobile services (such as Meals on Wheels or hospice care) or at a fixed location (such as a museum, YMCA, or halfway house where clients come to a location to receive services).

The locational decisions of nonprofits are driven by many factors, including the types of services provided, the intended audience, the availability of affordable space, public safety, the proximity to major transportation routes, and public policies such as zoning restriction. Choices also are predicated on the number of other organizations operating in a
particular geographic area and the relative generosity of the community (Wolpert, 1989; McPherson & Rotolo, 1996). But a significant consideration of many nonprofits, particularly education, youth-related and social welfare providers, is to be located near potential clients and community needs (Bielefeld et al., 1997). Indeed, Wolch and Geiger (1983) found that the locations of nonprofit social welfare and community service organizations in Los Angeles County were related positively to need-based community variables, such as infant mortality rates, crime rates and the percentage of the population in certain age groups—the elderly or children, for example.

To examine the spatial dimensions of community-based organizations in Summit County vis-à-vis local socioeconomic conditions, we used information from the Organizational Database of Selected Communities and the U.S. Bureau of the Census. More specifically, we compared the locations of nonprofit groups in relation to community indicators of need, such as median household income and rates of poverty. The analysis revealed six key findings.

Half of the community-based organizations of Summit County are located within the city limits of Akron. Community-based organizations are located throughout Summit County, although there is significant clustering in the downtown area (see map 3). Half of the county’s nonprofit organizations are located in Akron. 4 Faith-based groups and religious congregations, however, are somewhat more widely dispersed than secular organizations. About 55 percent of faith-related organizations are located outside of the city of Akron, compared with 44 percent of secular nonprofits. The wider geographic distribution of

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4 The city of Akron represents approximately 15 percent of the total land area of Summit County. The county encompasses about 420 square miles, and the city of Akron has 63 square miles.
congregations is not surprising given that many congregations locate in areas that are easily accessible to their members.

Groups that are of primary interest to the Foundation are more likely than other community-based groups to be sited where the need in Summit County is greatest. As indicated above, areas of high poverty tend to be concentrated in the central sections of Akron, and about half of all nonprofit organizations in the county are located within the city limits. These spatial patterns suggest that many nonprofit organizations are likely to be located in areas of need. Indeed, when nonprofit groups are spatially mapped against indicators of need, about one in four (or 25.4 percent) are in high poverty neighborhoods.

Organizations that engage in activities that relate to the Foundation’s seven program areas are more likely than other types of community-based groups to be located in high poverty neighborhoods. More than one-third of program-related community-based groups are sited in areas of high poverty, compared with about one in five (22 percent) of the remaining organizations. This finding suggests that there is a rich array of institutions that can be drawn upon by policy officials, grantmakers and local residents to build community capacity in some of the more highly distressed areas of Summit County.

Nonprofit arts and cultural groups are widely scattered throughout Summit County and are fairly evenly distributed among income areas. Although there is some clustering of arts and cultural organizations in the downtown area of Akron, the distribution of these groups is remarkably uniform across the county (see map 4). About one-third (33 percent) of the arts groups are located in census tracts where the median household income is $40,000 or greater. Another third (37 percent) are sited in neighborhoods where median
household income is between $20,000 and $40,000, and the remaining third (30 percent) are located in lower income areas where the median household income is less than $20,000.5

This geographic pattern may, in part, contribute to the popularity of arts and cultural events in the county. According to a recent survey, more than two-thirds (69 percent) of residents attended at least one arts and cultural activity in the past year—about the same proportion as those who attended a movie or sporting event (PSRA, 1999). Although Akron residents tend to participate in arts and cultural activities only one or two times per year, they did not express a strong desire for additional arts and cultural activities. When asked if there were “not enough arts and cultural activities” in the county, the majority of residents (83 percent) said it was not a problem or only a small problem.

Three-quarters of nonprofit educational providers in Summit County are located in moderate and high-income neighborhoods. The distribution of educational providers in the county tend to favor moderate and higher income areas (see map 5). Children in high poverty neighborhoods are less likely to have ready access to these types of services.

The downtown core of Akron has a cluster of nonprofit educational groups, but a closer analysis of these organizations shows that they either are related to the University of Akron, are scholarship funds, or are administrative and planning bodies, such as the Akron Regional Development Board of Education. Nonprofit preschools and primary and secondary schools are, for the most part, absent from lower income neighborhoods. Indeed, of the 18 Parent-Teacher Associations in Summit County that could be geocoded6 and mapped, none of them were located in lower income neighborhoods. Two-thirds were in moderate income neighborhoods and one-third in higher income communities.

5 The median household income in Summit County in 1990 was roughly $26,400.
6 See Appendix A for the methodology of the spatial analysis.
Education is an issue of concern to many Summit County residents. Nearly half indicated that low-quality public schools were a problem in the community and ranked this concern among the top five biggest problems for the county (PSRA, 1999). African American residents, in particular, were concerned about educational issues, with about one in three citing illiteracy as being a major problem. An encouraging finding from the PSRA study is that people who felt that quality education was a problem were more likely than others to get involved with tutoring or other educational activities.

Organizations that target their services to lower-income residents tend to cluster in the poorest areas of Summit County. In contrast to arts and education-related groups, which are geographically scattered, organizations that offer services to the poor tend to be located in the downtown area of Akron and the surrounding high poverty neighborhoods in Summit County. More than half (56 percent) of community-based groups that primarily focus on child-related and social welfare programs are located in high poverty areas near downtown Akron (see map 6). Only three of these groups are sited in the higher income areas, where the median household income is greater than $40,000. The concentration of child-related and social welfare organizations in lower income areas suggests that they are sited in places where they can potentially address the needs of the county’s high-risk families. Further study is needed, however, to determine the actual population being served and the types of services being provided.

Similarly, the spatial distribution of other groups that target services to low-income residents also tend to cluster in the high poverty neighborhoods of Akron (see map 7). Community development groups are particularly prevalent in the poorer inner city areas. About half are sited in the high poverty neighborhoods of Akron. The remainder are located
in moderate income areas and generally near major transportation routes. Interestingly, none of the organizations that primarily target services to the homeless population are located directly in high poverty areas, although two of the three organizations in this category that could be geocoded were sited in neighborhoods adjacent to high poverty areas.

Because so many community-based groups that provide community development, social welfare services, and literacy programs are located in lower income areas, the seeds for developing a community-based infrastructure designed to assist low-income residents may already be in place. Further information about the programs and capacities of these organizations is needed to determine how to enhance their services.

**Community-based organizations that promote citizenship are generally located in downtown Akron.** As map 8 shows, six of the seven organizations that focus on citizenship issues are located within the city limits of Akron. Five of the six are in high poverty neighborhoods.

It is unclear, however, if these groups target their services to low-income residents. Kids Voting of Northeast Ohio, for example, has a broad mission to encourage political participation by younger voters. The tendency of citizenship organizations to locate in downtown neighborhoods may reflect the availability of space or their desire to be in close proximity to similar organizations. Nonetheless, the relative proximity to one another provides enormous potential for collaboration among these groups.

**Conclusion**

The reorientation toward community-based problem solving by policymakers and several foundations is tied in part to the geographic concentration and seeming intractability of
poverty in the United States. Summit County has a moderate level of poverty vis-à-vis national and state figures, yet its poor residents are isolated in a handful of high poverty neighborhoods. The good economic times that many Summit County residents enjoy have not reached these distressed areas.

Although socioeconomic indicators show that Summit County is a community with geographic areas of deep poverty and substantial need, it also has the rudiments of a rich civic infrastructure. Public support of local institutions is relatively strong, although local public schools receive the lowest ratings. The majority of residents feel positively toward their community, and 80 percent say that they know the names of their neighbors (PSRA, 1999). Most residents of Akron believe that they can have a positive effect on their community. About one-quarter of residents feel they can have a big impact, and another 40 percent say they can have a moderate impact. This positive picture of Summit County varies by race and income group, however. More affluent residents and white residents express more positive feelings than do lower income residents and African Americans.

In addition to these signs of civic engagement, Summit County has an expansive set of community-based organizations that provide a variety of services to local residents. Indeed, the density of nonprofit organizations in Summit County is nearly 75 percent greater than the national average.

Community-based groups are located throughout the county, with half located in the city limits of Akron. The spatial distribution of these nonprofit organizations varies by type of service provided. Some, such as educational groups, are more likely to be in moderate and higher income areas, while those that focus on social welfare and community development
are more prominent in lower income neighborhoods. These spatial patterns form a complex mosaic for addressing community concerns and developing local partnerships.

Understanding the geographic location of community-based organizations is a good starting point for developing a community building strategy. It provides a basis for identifying the potential resources that currently exist in the community and their geographic proximity to local needs. Additional information is needed, however, on the program content and organizational structure of these community-based groups to understand more fully their potential for addressing community needs. The exploration of these issues and further dialogue with community residents can help formulate the next steps in a community building strategy for Akron and Summit County.
Map 1. Percentage of People in Poverty by Census Tract, in Summit County

Source: Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, The Urban Institute
Note: Census tracts are roughly equivalent in population size.
Map 2. Percentage of African American Residents by Census Tract, in Summit County

Source: Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, The Urban Institute
Note: Census tracts are roughly equivalent in population size.
Map 3. Locations of Community-Based Organizations in Summit County

Source: Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, The Urban Institute
Note: Census tracts are roughly equivalent in population size.
Map 4. Locations of Arts and Cultural Organizations by Median Household Income in Summit County

Source: Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, The Urban Institute
Note: Census tracts are roughly equivalent in population size.
Map 5. Locations of Nonprofit Education Providers by Median Household Income in Summit County

Source: Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, The Urban Institute
Note: Census tracts are roughly equivalent in population size.

Source: Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, The Urban Institute
Note: Census tracts are roughly equivalent in population size.
Map 7. Locations of Other Services for Low-Income Residents by Percentage Living in Poverty in Summit County

Source: Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, The Urban Institute
Note: Census tracts are roughly equivalent in population size.
Map 8. Locations of Groups Focused on Citizenship by Median Household Income in Summit County

Source: Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, The Urban Institute
Note: Census tracts are roughly equivalent in population size.
Appendix A. Research Methodology and Technical Documentation

The statistical information used in this report was compiled from a number of sources. A brief description of the data and the methodologies used in writing the report is provided below.

Data Sources
Two types of data were used to document the organizations and social and economic conditions of four communities in which the Knight Foundation provides grants. These communities include Bibb County, GA; Lake County, IN; Summit County, OH; and Philadelphia, PA. First, CNP collected sociodemographic and economic data to understand community characteristics, such as income, poverty levels, and age of the residents. We also gathered organizational data to document the size, scope and location of the nonprofit and selected for-profit and public organizations in these communities.

Sociodemographic and Economic Data
These data were obtained from the 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census. The decennial census is the most complete (and sometimes only) source of data to examine sociodemographic and economic features of small geographic areas. These data were used to construct maps that reflect a variety of sociodemographic and economic patterns across the communities at the census tract level.

Organizational Data
An important goal of this research was to create a timely and usable database on which the Foundation could draw information on organizations in the four communities. Thus, the Organizational Database was produced in an ACCESS format to allow CNP and the Foundation to identify various types of groups operating in the four areas. This Organizational Database included three key components, including data files of community-based organizations, schools, and selected for-profit and public agencies that may operate as institutional amenities or disamenities in local neighborhoods.

Community-Based Organizations.
The dataset of community-based groups was compiled from several sources. CNP used the 1996–1998 IRS Return Transaction Files (RTF) as a starting point in the development of this data file. These files contain roughly 35 financial variables for all 501(c)(3) organizations that file Forms 990 with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and represent the primary sources of organizational and financial information on nonprofit organizations in the United States. Because no single source of information can capture all of the nonprofit organizations in the four communities, we combined several sources of data with the RTF data to build a more representative picture of the number, size, and types of nonprofit organizations located in these counties.

But nonprofits with less than $25,000 in gross receipts are not required to file a Form 990 with the IRS. Therefore, CNP collected data from four additional sources to include in the database as many organizations that would potentially fall below this threshold. We obtained lists of grantees from the local United Way chapters in each of the four counties. Included in these lists were basic geographic information for United Way grantees, as well as
descriptions of their programs and services. More specifically, we obtained information from the United Way of Summit County 1999 Campaign Brochure and their website, www.uwsummit.org; the 1998 Lake Area United Way Annual Report and campaign brochure; and the website and 1999 Campaign Brochure of the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania’s (www.uwsepa.org). We also received the Agency Programs Database from the United Way of Central Georgia.

We also added community-based groups to the database from the Unified Database of Arts Organizations. This dataset was produced through the collaborative efforts of the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Assembly of State Art Agencies, and the National Center for Charitable Statistics at the Urban Institute. The Unified Database of Arts Organizations was compiled from IRS data sources and State Art Agencies’ mailing and grantee lists.

Because religious congregations are not required to file the Form 990 with the IRS, the majority of faith-based groups are not included in the IRS Data. Therefore, CNP also used the 1997 PhoneDisc CD and a list of congregations in the four areas from the American Church Lists, Inc. (www.americanchurchlists.com), to supplement the Organizational Database. The PhoneDisc CD allows users to search for businesses by their Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes and limit these searches by geographic area. The SIC code, 866101, defined as “Churches, Temples, and Shrines” was used for this analysis. Data from the American Churches Lists, Inc., includes basic, descriptive information on congregations in the four communities.

Finally, we added to the organizational database information received from the Knight Foundation on its grant applicants in the four communities. Included in the database is grant application and recipient information, as well as data on organizations that had their grant applications rejected.

**Schools.**
Primary and secondary schools are important elements of civil society. In addition to providing educational opportunities for local youth, they also serve as meeting ground for local civic organizations and residents. Thus, a second data file in the Organizational Database contains information on elementary and secondary education schools in the four communities. We extracted these data on local schools from the Common Core of Data 1993–1994. This database provides a complete list of public elementary and secondary schools in the country. It also includes information on the number of students per grade, number of student by race/ethnicity, number of students eligible for free lunch, and the number of full-time classroom teachers.

**Selected For-Profit Organizations and Public Agencies.**
Organizations coexist in local neighborhoods, but often work for different community or individual goals. Some for-profit organizations and public agencies have goals that tend to foster community capacity and growth or provide goods and services to local residents that assist in economic independence, while others engage in activities that may promote the social pathologies that plague local communities. The former group is labeled as institutional amenities, and includes firms such as groceries, banks, transportation services, libraries, police and fire departments, and libraries. The later set of organizations is identified as
institutional disamenities, which include bars, liquor stores, pawn shops, and massage parlors.

The Foundation expressed an interest in understanding the breadth of these institutional types in the four communities. Thus, we used the Dunn and Bradstreet Market Place CD, 1997, to extract nearly 6,000 businesses in the four counties that serve as institutional amenities or disamenities in local communities. The Dunn and Bradstreet database allows for the identification of businesses by industry and area. The extract from Dunn and Bradstreet provides a third data file in the Organizational Database.

**Database Construction**

Nonprofit data from the IRS Return Transaction Files were combined with the organizations obtained from the United Way organizations; congregations from the Phone CD and American Church Lists; arts and culture organizations from the Unified Arts Database; and grant applicant information from the Knight Foundation to create the Organizational Database. After data from sources were merged, they were checked for duplication and corrected for consistency.

Using the National Taxonomy of Except Entities (Core Codes), CNP classified the community-based organizations by their organization’s primary purpose. The NTEE is a mixed notation classification system that consists of 26 major group categories and 645 subgroup categories. The codes reflect the types of activities conducted by nonprofit organizations. Several organizations, such as the Foundation Center, the AAFRC Trust for Philanthropy, and Philanthropic Research, Inc., use NTEE in their reports and publications to provide comparability among data collection systems. Using the NTEE system, we also classified the community-based organizations along the Foundation’s seven program areas, including arts and culture, children and social welfare, citizenship, community development, education, homelessness, and literacy.

To examine the relationship between socioeconomic characteristics of the four areas and their community-based resources, CNP prepared the database for geographic mapping. Working from street addresses, we “geocoded” each organization (that is, it was assigned a longitude and latitude code) through a computer software mapping program. This procedure allows us to plot the location of organizations on the maps that are presented in this report.

Not all organizations, however, can be geocoded. Some groups reported addresses that could not be located; others provided post office box information that cannot be mapped accurately with spatial software. To address this problem, CNP mailed a survey to organizations for which geographic information was missing in the database of organizations. These were organizations that had Post Office boxes instead of street addresses. Five hundred organizations were surveyed to obtain their street location. We achieved a response rate of 36.6 percent (183 organizations). There were 36 cases where the survey was returned as “Return to Sender;” these case were deemed as dead organizations and deleted from the Organizational Database. After processing the survey information, approximately 92 percent of groups in the Organizational Database were mappable using spatial software.

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7 For more information on the construction of the NTEE system, see Stevenson et al. (1997) *State Nonprofit Almanac 1997: Profiles of Charitable Organizations* and [http://nccs.urban.org/ntee-cc/index.htm](http://nccs.urban.org/ntee-cc/index.htm).
Bibliography


