Midland County, Michigan
Community Assessment Process
2012

www.midlandcountydashboard.org
Introduction

Midland County’s needs assessment contained on www.midlandcountydashboard.org will help us better understand some of the top needs in our community. The assessment was conducted by the Midland Area Community Foundation (MACF) with the support and endorsement of the Health and Human Services Council (Community Collaborative).

Saginaw Valley State University collected the publicly available data, including data collected by various entities that are part of the Health and Human Services Council, such as the Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, Development Assets Survey, and others. Why is a needs assessment necessary for Midland County? We saw the need for an always up-to-date, comprehensive community needs website. We wanted to make sure all information is considered and provide a resource that will help nonprofits and other organizations within our community to understand our key needs so we can utilize strategies to address them effectively.

One of the issues often seen with a needs assessment is that numbers alone don’t always tell the entire story. Because of this, in addition to the quantitative data collection, focus groups were conducted to elicit opinions and ideas from key stakeholders in our community. This approach allowed us to get a comprehensive look at the needs facing Midland County today. Community members were asked to give their ideas. Two newspaper articles invited input and the Midland Area Community Foundation website and Facebook page also asked for the community to share their ideas. Community members called, e-mailed and filled out on-line forms. The Top Community Needs were compiled based on data collected and feedback from focus groups. The Top Needs list has been endorsed by the Midland County Health and Human Services Council (community collaborative) and has been compiled in consultation with various organizations and agencies throughout the community.

While the Midland County Dashboard Website is organized around six broad topic areas: intellectual and social development, economy, safety, health, environment and civic engagement, these topics were broken down even further for focus group discussion. The nine areas utilized for MACF Civic Engagement Focus Groups were:

1. Education
2. Youth Development
3. Physical/Social Health
4. Safety
5. Environment
6. Economy
7. Homelessness/Poverty
8. Social Capital & Civic Engagement
9. Arts & Recreation
Two separate focus groups were held regarding each of the nine areas. Participants were asked to answer the following questions:

1. What are we doing well in Midland County in this topic area?
2. What are we not doing well in Midland County in this topic area?
3. What are your recommendations to overcome the gaps and disconnects in this particular topic area?

We look forward to utilizing this information so that we as a community can develop key community goals in each area to help us improve Midland County. In the summary of the Needs Assessment process, you will find the Top 10 Social Issues from the Health and Human Service Council of Midland; Summary of the Process for the Midland Area Community Foundation Needs Assessment Focus Groups; and the Midland County Needs Assessment List Of Top Community Needs. The top community needs were compiled based on data collected and feedback from focus groups. The top needs list has been endorsed by the Midland County Health and Human Services Council (community collaborative) and has been compiled in consultation with various organizations and agencies throughout the community.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (UNRANKED)

Top 10 Social Issues

ACCESS TO CARE: Health care coverage is down 6% since 2006 and 9% since 2002. Only 7 in 10 in the 18-29 age range have insurance, compared to 8 in 10 overall. Just 58.2% are receiving medical checkups, down from 70.2% in 2006 and 2002. Dental visits have also decreased over 5% since 2006. *(Age, education and income are all factors.)*

BASIC NEEDS: The average jobless rate in 2011 was nearly 8% and over 1 in 5 residents were not able to pay all of their bills on time. More than 65% of calls to 2-1-1 were for basic needs.

DEPRESSION/SUICIDE: 16% of teenage girls in our community were frequently depressed and 13% have attempted suicide, compared with 10% of local boys. Community Mental Health is counseling over 200 citizens for depression, the most diagnosed condition. *(Nationally: 11% of adolescents have a depressive disorder by the age of eighteen. 12% of older adults are depressed, but represent 20% of suicides.)*

HOMELESS: In 2010, 3% of local respondents said they had been homeless for part of the year, 34.1% of those have children. Members of unmarried couples were least able to pay their bills on time and were most likely to be homeless part of the year.

INFANT MORTALITY: Our infant mortality rate is 6.1%, with a low birth weight rate of 7.6%. *(Typical factors considered, we fare no better than the State.)*

OBESITY: Two out of 3 adults report being overweight, an increase of 4.7% since 2006. Of children, those under 10 are at the highest risk of being overweight or obese. Just 34% of adults and 84% of youth are at an acceptable weight.

POVERTY: Individuals and families with incomes below $20,000 paid between 50-80% of their income for housing. The recommended target is 35%. The most recent City needs assessment found a 484 unit deficiency for extremely low-income households.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE: Students are starting to drink at a younger age, while 17% of adults report binge or excessive drinking in the last month. Earlier reductions in smoking rates in 2006, have reversed, rising 2% to 23%.

*CONTINUED ON BACK*
TOP 10 SOCIAL ISSUES
(CONTINUED)

Younger men, those with some college education, and with incomes of $50-70,000 are more likely to use smokeless tobacco products. In 2011, more than 50% of local treatment admissions were for opiate dependency, including prescription drugs. In 2011, opiate use outpaced alcohol problems—a rare phenomenon.

TRANSPORTATION: Our top unmet needs from calls to 2-1-1 of Northeast Michigan relate to transportation.

VIOLENCE/PHYSICAL ABUSE: Of teenagers surveyed, 28% had experienced physical harm at home and 27% had been victims of physical violence in the past two years. Law enforcement responded to an average of two 911 calls per day where someone was in fear for their safety or the safety of others. In 2010, there were 88 reports of criminal sexual contact. (Nationally: only 27% of domestic incidents and just 40% of rapes are reported to law enforcement.)
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Midland Area Community Foundation

Midland County Needs Assessment
Focus Groups
What is the needs assessment?

• Conducted by Midland Area Community Foundation with the support and endorsement of the Health and Human Services Council
• Saginaw Valley State University collects publicly available data, including that collected by various entities that are part of the HHSC (i.e. the Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, the Developmental Assets Survey, Midland County Youth Master Plan, and others). This is eventually used to populate website.
• Conduct focus groups to elicit the opinions and ideas from key stakeholders
• Compile qualitative information with quantitative information
• Release results to community
Why a needs assessment?

• Look comprehensively at community needs
• Ensure that all information is considered
• Provide a resource for nonprofits and other organizations/businesses
Benefits and Values

• Better understanding of the community’s needs
• Better prioritization of the community’s needs
• Help MACF better align its future investments in grant making
Midland County Needs Assessment
Focus Group Process

• Broad areas of prospective Midland County needs identified
  • Education
  • Youth Development
  • Physical/Social Health
  • Safety
  • Environment
  • Economy
  • Homelessness/Poverty
  • Social Capital/Civic Engagement
  • Arts/Recreation
Midland County Needs Assessment
Focus Group Process

- Relevant public-source data gathered by SVSU
- Focus group participants identified for each area based on
  - Knowledge
  - Experience
  - Expertise
Midland County Needs Assessment
Focus Group Process

• Based on the data and your know-how
  • What are we doing well?
  • What are we not doing so well?
  • What would you recommend to overcome the gaps and disconnects?
Midland County Needs Assessment
Focus Group Process

• Ground Rules
  • 25 minutes per question
  • Please wait to be recognized
  • One comment at a time
  • No right/wrong responses—OK to disagree
  • Comments will be recorded on the PC and projected for all to see
  • Final report will be sent to each participant
Midland Area Community Foundation

Thank You!
The top community needs were compiled based on data collected and feedback from focus groups. The top needs list has been endorsed by the Midland County Health and Human Services Council (community collaborative) and has been compiled in consultation with various organizations and agencies throughout the community. Further information can be found at www.midlandcountydashboard.org.

1. **Shortfall in poverty-related learning and educational achievement**

Poverty appears to be a leading indicator of low learning and educational achievement in Midland County. The Michigan Educational Achievement Program (MEAP) and Michigan Merit Exam (MME) scores in the County are inversely related to poverty levels, viz., the greater the percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced lunches, a strong indicator of poverty, the lower the MEAP and MME scores of the district. Poverty levels are increasing in the County and they negatively affect both access to programming and to educational achievement as well. For example, while research clearly demonstrates the strong positive relationship between early childhood development and educational success in later life, children living in poverty have limited access to quality preschool programming. Among the issues identified are a growing number of students who need special services, a widening gap between high and low achieving students, a moderate drop in graduation rates, and an increased need for literacy tutoring services for both children as well as adults.

- Graduation rates are crucial: [http://midlandcountydashboard.org/high-school-graduation-rate.html](http://midlandcountydashboard.org/high-school-graduation-rate.html) and give evidence of economic success: [http://midlandcountydashboard.org/data9.html](http://midlandcountydashboard.org/data9.html) especially when linked to the data in Education beyond high school.
2. Inadequate public transportation

In many cases, educational and learning opportunities are available to Midland County youth but they have limited access to transportation to bring them to the program. While Dial-A-Ride and County Connection are available, they are not always convenient or cost-effective options to get to the desired programs. The issue of transportation exists for the very young (e.g., access to quality preschool programs) as well as for secondary students (e.g., access to career technical and college courses).

Low wage individuals also find themselves unable to access both job skills training courses as well as higher paying jobs, when available, owing to inadequate transportation options. While the currently available alternatives are used, they are not very convenient and are rather expensive for a person earning a minimum wage. Consideration should also be given to a fixed route structure that brings riders into needed areas including shops, medical services, agencies, etc. In addition, transportation options outside of the city are limited.

While the physical environment of Midland is good, accessing some of the programs and sites is limited, especially to low income individuals and families. Local recreational areas and parks have low utilization rates owing to access/transportation issues. In addition, the ongoing integration of non-motorized transportation options is encouraged.

Seniors who no longer drive are also challenged with transportation needs. While Senior Services provides assistance with this, the need will continue to grow as the percentage of seniors in the community increases.

- Also is influenced by Transportation that include implications: http://midlandcountydashboard.org/additional-resources22.html
- Most of this emerged from the focus groups and Users—not much data in research other than in health inequity: http://midlandcountydashboard.org/health-inequity.html and the MIHIA and Health County Rankings: http://midlandcountydashboard.org/data13.html
- The Environment Section: http://midlandcountydashboard.org/environment.html has some implications as well as a larger analysis: http://midlandcountydashboard.org/additional-resources22.html
- The growing number of children 0-5 qualifying for programs also impacts transportation. See School readiness: http://midlandcountydashboard.org/school-readiness.html includes six measures found at: http://midlandcountydashboard.org/data11.html

3. Lack of affordable housing/shelter for low income earners

Poverty and homelessness are not widely acknowledged in the County. There is insufficient capacity for affordable housing for low income earners who sometimes encounter discrimination based on their economic circumstances. There is also a related lack of shelter and/or transitional housing options for those families undergoing changes in their lives. Of the low cost housing that is available, many units appear to have substandard maintenance and repair issues that tend to drive up the overall cost of occupancy. Heat and electricity bills are especially high in some of these units owing to inferior insulation, poorly fitting doors and windows, and leaking roofs.

- The easiest way to show this is to highlight the economy section and its subsections found here: http://midlandcountydashboard.org/economy.html
- Also the following sections in Safety: http://midlandcountydashboard.org/safety1.html
  - Domestic Violence: http://midlandcountydashboard.org/domestic-violence.html
4. Increased substance abuse
There is increasing substance abuse in Midland County. While alcohol use is still the primary drug used, the use of opiates, including the misuse of prescription drugs, is a growing concern. In addition, experimentation is occurring with "designer" drugs including the very dangerous family of "bath salts". The consequences of substance abuse include vehicle crashes, work absenteeism, unwanted pregnancies, abused and neglected children, poor school performance, violence, crimes, and personal medical issues including death.


5. Declining access to health care for all/increasing demand
While Midland County is significantly growing its medical treatment facilities, access to health care is declining. This impacts a wide range of individuals including young professionals and others moving to the area, the economically disadvantaged and the elderly. Owing to complex economic factors favoring specialists, the number of primary care physicians is declining while demand for their services is increasing in part because of the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. In addition, limited transportation options are reducing access to health care among the poor. Dental care for the economically disadvantaged has improved through the Helping Hands Clinic, now operating under the Midland County Health Department, but it is available only to Medicaid-eligible patients. Access to dental care for low-income children is available through programs such as Healthy Kids Dental and “Adopt a Child Smile”.

- Also impacted is school readiness and data: School readiness: http://midlandcountydashboard.org/school-readiness.html includes six measures found at: http://midlandcountydashboard.org/data11.html.

6. Obesity rates among children and adults
Obesity rates among both children and adults are increasing in Midland County. Various factors are contributing to this issue including the lack of exercise, poor dietary practices, and increased sedentary lifestyles. The consequences of obesity include increases in cardio-vascular disease, diabetes, and ultimately, shortened life-spans.

7. Access to mental health services
There is a need for increased access to mental health services. While those individuals who qualify to receive services from Community Mental Health are obtaining care, those who are economically disadvantaged and do not qualify find themselves with very few if any options.


8. Need for senior services
More than 20% of Midland County’s population is older than 60 year old and is growing fast. The corresponding need for senior services is also increasing rapidly. Most of the required services are related to quality of life issues and include nutrition, finances, transportation, physical and mental health care, housing, and socialization. In addition, as Midland’s population of seniors increases, there has been an increase in the number of scams perpetrated on them. Most perpetrators take advantage of the presumed solid financial situation of seniors and their dependency and decline in cognitive functioning. Increased law enforcement and education programs can address the issue.

- Data from Focus Groups.
- Poverty Rates by Age: [http://midlandcountydashboard.org/poverty1.html](http://midlandcountydashboard.org/poverty1.html) and data: [http://midlandcountydashboard.org/data27.html](http://midlandcountydashboard.org/data27.html)
- Job growth in professions dealing with the elderly is also seen in Knowledge Economy: [http://midlandcountydashboard.org/knowledge-economy.html](http://midlandcountydashboard.org/knowledge-economy.html) shows the current growth in jobs in Midland aligns with assessment: [http://midlandcountydashboard.org/data5.html](http://midlandcountydashboard.org/data5.html)
- Health Factors: [http://midlandcountydashboard.org/health1.html](http://midlandcountydashboard.org/health1.html) including:
  - Health Care Access and Coverage
  - Life Expectancy
  - Health Inequity
  - Health-Related Quality of Life
  - Mental Health
  - Disabilities

9. Concern of continuing community safety
The number of law enforcement officers in the county has been reduced significantly owing to budgetary issues. While crime rates are still quite low in Midland County, there is a growing concern among law enforcement officers that crime rates will increase owing to the shortage of staff. There also is concern that crime is becoming a regional issues and that Midland is not immune from some of the crime issues that exist in neighboring communities. Regional concerns will almost certainly, in time, become Midland’s. There also are concerns that not every school in the County has a school resource officer available. This is especially troubling given the recent school shootings in the country.

- Data in Safety: [http://midlandcountydashboard.org/safety1.html](http://midlandcountydashboard.org/safety1.html) and Health: [http://midlandcountydashboard.org/health1.html](http://midlandcountydashboard.org/health1.html) supports not just adding more law enforcement but “social workers and counselors” as well. See Data in:
  - Child Abuse and Neglect
  - Domestic Violence
  - Youth Crime
  - Violent Crime
  - Neighborhood Safety
  - Suicide Prevention
  - Substance Abuse
  - Mental Health
10. Better coordination of services
While Midland County has a wide range of services available to low income individuals and families, they often find themselves involved in a myriad of “red tape”. Several described the process as running in a maze. Entry into the 211 system is convenient but once agencies are contacted, individuals are given multiple forms to be completed, often containing identical information, several individuals need to be called for interviews, the individual is required to travel to a number of locations, and needed services are provided in a piecemeal fashion. The availability of an advocate/mentor to provide “one-stop shopping”, to simplify the qualification process, to cut through the “red tape” would considerably streamline the process and hasten the provision of the needed services without the perception of a run-around.


11. Insufficient career technical educational opportunities for secondary students, nontraditional students, and the working poor
While Midland County public schools offer a broad range of career technical opportunities, there appears to be a perceived need for additional options for secondary students. While most Midland County graduates pursue post-secondary education at colleges and universities, many would prefer to have access to enhanced career technical courses in middle and high school. State curriculum requirements somewhat restrict the flexibility to enroll in these courses but demand exists to expand career technical course offerings. Collaborative arrangements with Delta College, the Bay-Arenac Skills Center, the Saginaw Career Center, Associated Building Contractors, MITECH+ and other area agencies have helped to provide additional offerings for students interested in these courses. Two new “hands on” curricular offerings have begun in Meridian Public Schools (New Tech) and in the Coleman Public Schools (Agro-science program) that are helping to address the demand for relevant options. New Tech in particular is a project-based learning methodology that also provides an early college experience for participating students.

In addition, a strong need was identified regarding non-traditional students and adults seeking training, professional development, or re-training in employable skill areas. The principal issues appear to be similar to those encountered by traditional secondary school students and include access to and affordability of existing career technical programs as well as curricular development and alignment with emerging higher employment areas. The working poor in Midland County typically have limited educat ions and low value job skills. This condition predictably leads to minimum to low wage employment for many. These income levels are insufficient to support a family and lead individuals to seek and become dependent on supplemental assistance for basic human needs such as food, shelter, health care and the like. Data supports the need for wages in the neighborhood of $12-15/hour as the minimum necessary to provide family stability. To achieve these incomes, there is a demonstrated and urgent need to provide job-training opportunities for these low skilled individuals in order to increase their value in the labor market. Strengthened college/post-secondary preparedness, acclimation, and access services also are needed for this population and for prospective first-generation post-secondary candidates.

- Impacts Intellectual and Social Development:


Also is influenced by Transportation that include implications: http://midlandcountydashboard.org/additional-resources22.html


12. Aging infrastructure
A modern economy requires state-of-the-art infrastructure including roads, water, electrical grid, high-speed internet access, and air/rail transportation. With diminishing tax revenues available to both the city and county governments, some of the required upgrades/updates have been deferred resulting in still higher costs to address some of the aging issues. In addition, maintenance of community assets will be needed to sustain the many quality of life and beautification projects throughout the county. Not every location in the County has access to high speed internet and modern, high speed limited access highways are needed as approaches to MBS airport from I-75 and US-10 to stimulate economic growth in the region.

Data from Focus Groups

13. Expansion of non-motorized trails and improved use of outdoor assets
Continued development of non-motorized trails throughout the city and county was encouraged. As mentioned previously, outdoor assets (i.e. parks, recreation areas) are not well utilized. Finding ways to promote and possibly further develop these areas is an area for consideration.

See Above and Focus Groups
Regional Studies are included in Civic Engagement, Transportation, and Health and Safety under additional resources.
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While the physical environment of Midland is good, accessing some of the programs and sites is limited, especially to low income individuals and families. Local recreational areas and parks have low utilization rates owing to access/transportation issues. In addition, the ongoing integration of non-motorized transportation options is encouraged.
Seniors who no longer drive are also challenged with transportation needs. While Senior Services provides assistance with this, the need will continue to grow as the percentage of seniors in the community increases.

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There is increasing substance abuse in Midland County. While alcohol use is still the primary drug used, the use of opiates, including the misuse of prescription drugs, is a growing concern. In addition, experimentation is occurring with “designer” drugs including the very dangerous family of “bath salts”. The consequences of substance abuse include vehicle crashes, work absenteeism, unwanted pregnancies, abused and neglected children, poor school performance, violence, crimes, and personal medical issues including death.


5. Declining access to health care for all/increasing demand
While Midland County is significantly growing its medical treatment facilities, access to health care is declining. This impacts a wide range of individuals including young professionals and others moving to the area, the economically disadvantaged and the elderly. Owing to complex economic factors favoring specialists, the number of primary care physicians is declining while demand for their services is increasing in part because of the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. In addition, limited transportation options are reducing access to health care among the poor. Dental care for the economically disadvantaged has improved through the Helping Hands Clinic, now operating under the Midland County Health Department, but it is available only to Medicaid-eligible patients. Access to dental care for low-income children is available through programs such as Healthy Kids Dental and “Adopt a Child Smile”.

- Also impacted is school readiness and data: School readiness: http://midlandcountydashboard.org/school-readiness.html includes six measures found at: http://midlandcountydashboard.org/data11.html.

6. Obesity rates among children and adults
Obesity rates among both children and adults are increasing in Midland County. Various factors are contributing to this issue including the lack of exercise, poor dietary practices, and increased sedentary lifestyles. The consequences of obesity include increases in cardio-vascular disease, diabetes, and ultimately, shortened life-spans.

7. Access to mental health services
There is a need for increased access to mental health services. While those individuals who qualify to receive services from Community Mental Health are obtaining care, those who are economically disadvantaged and do not qualify find themselves with very few if any options.


8. Need for senior services
More than 20% of Midland County’s population is older than 60 year old and is growing fast. The corresponding need for senior services is also increasing rapidly. Most of the required services are related to quality of life issues and include nutrition, finances, transportation, physical and mental health care, housing, and socialization. In addition, as Midland’s population of seniors increases, there has been an increase in the number of scams perpetrated on them. Most perpetrators take advantage of the presumed solid financial situation of seniors and their dependency and decline in cognitive functioning. Increased law enforcement and education programs can address the issue.

- Data from Focus Groups.
- Poverty Rates by Age: [http://midlandcountydashboard.org/poverty1.html](http://midlandcountydashboard.org/poverty1.html) and data: [http://midlandcountydashboard.org/data27.html](http://midlandcountydashboard.org/data27.html)
- Job growth in professions dealing with the elderly is also seen in Knowledge Economy: [http://midlandcountydashboard.org/knowledge-economy.html](http://midlandcountydashboard.org/knowledge-economy.html) shows the current growth in jobs in Midland aligns with assessment: [http://midlandcountydashboard.org/data5.html](http://midlandcountydashboard.org/data5.html)
- Health Factors: [http://midlandcountydashboard.org/health1.html](http://midlandcountydashboard.org/health1.html) including:
  - Health Care Access and Coverage
  - Life Expectancy
  - Health Inequity
  - Health-Related Quality of Life
  - Mental Health
  - Disabilities

9. Concern of continuing community safety
The number of law enforcement officers in the county has been reduced significantly owing to budgetary issues. While crime rates are still quite low in Midland County, there is a growing concern among law enforcement officers that crime rates will increase owing to the shortage of staff. There also is concern that crime is becoming a regional issues and that Midland is not immune from some of the crime issues that exist in neighboring communities. Regional concerns will almost certainly, in time, become Midland’s. There also are concerns that not every school in the County has a school resource officer available. This is especially troubling given the recent school shootings in the country.

- Data in Safety: [http://midlandcountydashboard.org/safety1.html](http://midlandcountydashboard.org/safety1.html) and Health: [http://midlandcountydashboard.org/health1.html](http://midlandcountydashboard.org/health1.html) supports not just adding more law enforcement but "social workers and counselors" as well. See Data in:
  - Child Abuse and Neglect
  - Domestic Violence
  - Youth Crime
  - Violent Crime
  - Neighborhood Safety
  - Suicide Prevention
  - Substance Abuse
  - Mental Health
10. Better coordination of services
While Midland County has a wide range of services available to low income individuals and families, they often find themselves involved in a myriad of “red tape”. Several described the process as running in a maze. Entry into the 211 system is convenient but once agencies are contacted, individuals are given multiple forms to be completed, often containing identical information, several individuals need to be called for interviews, the individual is required to travel to a number of locations, and needed services are provided in a piecemeal fashion. The availability of an advocate/mentor to provide “one-stop shopping”, to simplify the qualification process, to cut through the “red tape” would considerably streamline the process and hasten the provision of the needed services without the perception of a run-around.


11. Insufficient career technical educational opportunities for secondary students, nontraditional students, and the working poor
While Midland County public schools offer a broad range of career technical opportunities, there appears to be a perceived need for additional options for secondary students. While most Midland County graduates pursue post-secondary education at colleges and universities, many would prefer to have access to enhanced career technical courses in middle and high school. State curriculum requirements somewhat restrict the flexibility to enroll in these courses but demand exists to expand career technical course offerings. Collaborative arrangements with Delta College, the Bay-Arenac Skills Center, the Saginaw Career Center, Associated Building Contractors, MITECH+ and other area agencies have helped to provide additional offerings for students interested in these courses. Two new “hands on” curricular offerings have begun in Meridian Public Schools (New Tech) and in the Coleman Public Schools (Agro-science program) that are helping to address the demand for relevant options. New Tech in particular is a project-based learning methodology that also provides an early college experience for participating students.

In addition, a strong need was identified regarding non-traditional students and adults seeking training, professional development, or re-training in employable skill areas. The principal issues appear to be similar to those encountered by traditional secondary school students and include access to and affordability of existing career technical programs as well as curricular development and alignment with emerging higher employment areas. The working poor in Midland County typically have limited educations and low value job skills. This condition predictably leads to minimum to low wage employment for many. These income levels are insufficient to support a family and lead individuals to seek and become dependent on supplemental assistance for basic human needs such as food, shelter, health care and the like. Data supports the need for wages in the neighborhood of $12-15/hour as the minimum necessary to provide family stability. To achieve these incomes, there is a demonstrated and urgent need to provide job-training opportunities for these low skilled individuals in order to increase their value in the labor market. Strengthened college/post-secondary preparedness, acclimation, and access services also are needed for this population and for prospective first-generation post-secondary candidates.

• Impacts Intellectual and Social Development:
12. Aging infrastructure
A modern economy requires state-of-the-art infrastructure including roads, water, electrical grid, high-speed internet access, and air/rail transportation. With diminishing tax revenues available to both the city and county governments, some of the required upgrades/updates have been deferred resulting in still higher costs to address some of the aging issues. In addition, maintenance of community assets will be needed to sustain the many quality of life and beautification projects throughout the county. Not every location in the County has access to high speed internet and modern, high speed limited access highways are needed as approaches to MBS airport from I-75 and US-10 to stimulate economic growth in the region.

• Data from Focus Groups

13. Expansion of non-motorized trails and improved use of outdoor assets
Continued development of non-motorized trails throughout the city and county was encouraged. As mentioned previously, outdoor assets (i.e. parks, recreation areas) are not well utilized. Finding ways to promote and possibly further develop these areas is an area for consideration.

• See Above and Focus Groups
• Regional Studies are included in Civic Engagement, Transportation, and Health and Safety under additional resources.
• http://midlandcountydashboard.org/additional-resources22.html