



BARBERTON
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Community Needs Assessment 2022



Barberton Community Needs Assessment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Making Barberton a great place to raise a family, build a career, and explore.

About the Barberton Community Needs Assessment

Barberton Community Foundation, the City of Barberton, Barberton City School District, and Summa Health sponsored the 2022 Needs Assessment for the Barberton community. The Needs Assessment is an in-depth analysis of the top assets and needs within the historical and growing Barberton community. The Needs Assessment is designed to examine:

- What strengths and challenges exist in Barberton;
- How different elements of the community influence each other and contribute to the broader story of need; and
- How the quality of life for the residents of Barberton can be positively impacted.

An Inclusive Mixed-Methods Approach

Several strategies were implemented to gather input from as many Barberton residents as possible. Data sources included:

- Publicly available data regarding the history, investments, and priorities of Barberton;
- Published sources including the American Community Survey, County Health Rankings, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Summit County GIS Open Data Portal;
- **12 focus groups** with a total **45 community members** including representatives from the following diverse communities: Arabic speaking; Spanish speaking; African American; business owners; youth; older adults; parents; individuals living with disabilities and their families; social service providers; and fire/EMS personnel; and
- **1,163 survey responses** (1,111 general community survey, plus 52 surveys from juniors and seniors in high school).

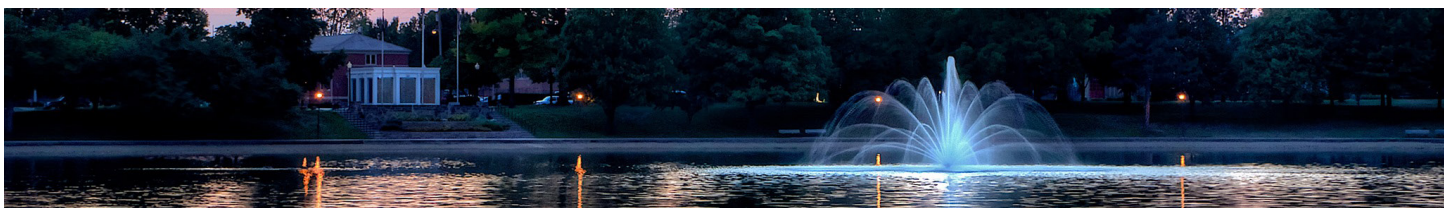


Strengths of Barberton

Great appreciation for parks and natural resources among residents
High air quality ratings
Sense of history and culture
High valuation of family
Stable population with large number of mid-life and working-age adults
Trends of longer-term, stable residents
Mid-to-high homeownership rate (60%)
High voter turnout (70% of registered voters)
High percentage of women- and minority-owned business enterprises
Perceptions of strong K-12 school system with high attendance
High degree of skills and abilities among residents (blue collar, sports, professional, safety, art)
Perception that health care services are useful for children and mothers
Recent improvements in mental health treatment resources
Low rate of violent crime and general perception of safety among residents

Challenges of Barberton

Perception of poor water quality
Recent lack of attention on parks and upkeep of public spaces (e.g., litter)
High dissatisfaction with roads and sidewalks, especially at gateways
Lack of infrastructure for non-car users
Lack of geographic cohesion within Barberton
Deterioration of housing stock due to age and/or blight
Lack of diversity in housing stock
Concerns over noise pollution
Lack of communication or awareness about community events among residents
Feelings of isolation and racism among diverse community members, related to events, social aspects, and city investments
Lack of retail amenities
Lack of awareness or access to affordable extracurriculars for youth
Issues with chronic absenteeism in K-12 schools
Lack of amenities for adults (e.g., gyms, clubs, learning opportunities)
Limited resources available for assistance with employment, education, childcare, and minority population needs (ESL)
High cost of living (utilities, groceries)
Prevalence of low-income families with limited financial literacy
Indications of poor health behaviors (e.g., smoking)
Sense of distrust and tension between elected officials and residents
Unclear distribution of funding for infrastructure projects



Opportunities of Barberton

Central location between several major cities and park systems
Existing funds available for infrastructure projects and brownfield redevelopment
Desire among residents to spend more recreational time in Barberton at shops, amenities, and destination stores
Cultural interest in destination spots and leveraging the identity of a community
Desire among residents for more program, activities, and events for people of all ages and identities
Interest among residents in homeownership

Threats of Barberton

Local industry, zoning, and management practices create barriers in maintaining water quality and road quality
Anticipated reduction in funding post-pandemic
Challenges in attracting and retaining service providers for Internet and cable, leading to limited options for residents
Slow growth of new resident population due to youth relocation and disinterest in moving to Barberton
Widespread increasing mental health concerns
Concerns over homelessness, drug use, and property crimes
Workforce shortages in critical fields such as education, healthcare, and professional services
High cost of childrearing, with childcare as a top factor in gaining or keeping employment
Frequent need to leave Barberton to access social services/resources and professional services
Weak vertical linkages to organizations and groups outside of Barberton
Challenges in attracting and retaining professional services, sciences, accommodations, and transportation services
Challenges in attracting and retaining specialized medical professionals and non-MDs

Top Needs

Four key themes emerged as top needs for the community:



Greater diversity and inclusion with respect to Barberton's social dynamics and recreational opportunities, with particular emphasis on people of color, single mothers, and individuals of different ages and abilities.



Improvements to road conditions, sidewalks, and blight, especially along gateways to the city. Residents believe this will positively impact the initial impression and day-to-day ease of traveling in Barberton.



Opportunities for increased financial stability of community members, so they can better meet their needs and build wealth. Community members would like to see more investment in economic and employment initiatives that leverage existing human capital.



Greater collaboration, cooperation, empowerment, and trust among residents, current or prospective business owners, and the City of Barberton's leadership.

From the Community

Community members value Barberton as a small-town, family-oriented community with history and opportunity. Yet, only 27% survey respondents report that quality of life is very good, or excellent in Barberton (Figure 1).

"Most of the teachers want you to succeed and help you get there.... We have so many resources and opportunities in Barberton to help you grow and learn."
—White Female Student

Figure 1. Quality of Life in Barberton

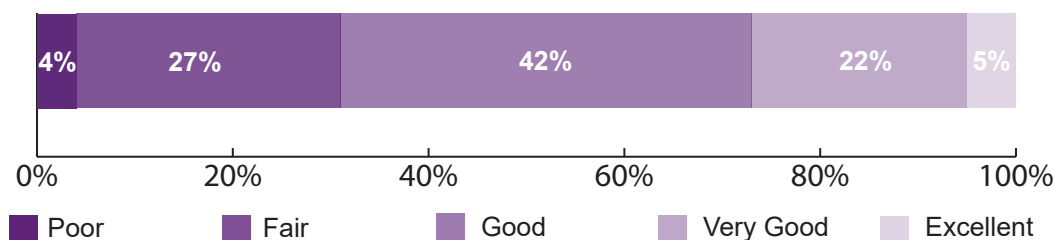
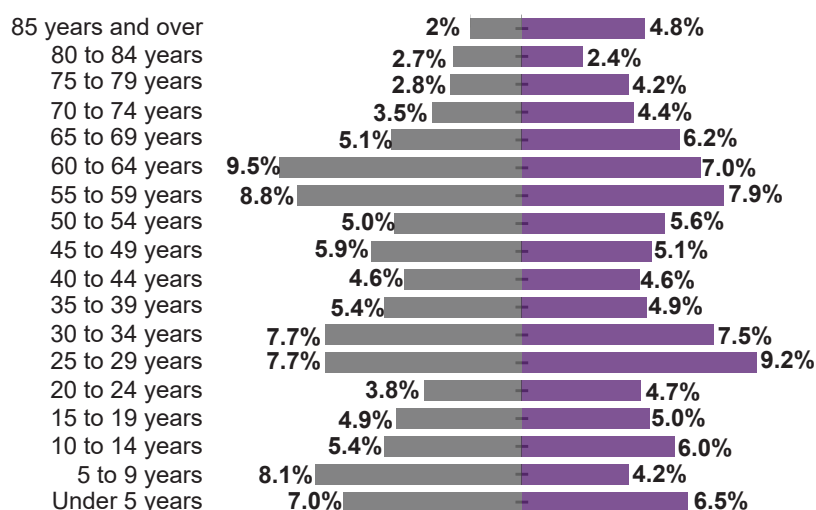


Figure 2. Barberton Age Sex Population Pyramid



"Think about location [of events], having a variety of entertainment for the mix of people that live in town (not just polka and country music) and not only think about who the event should bring in but also what vendors have the opportunity to advertise their business."

—Black Female

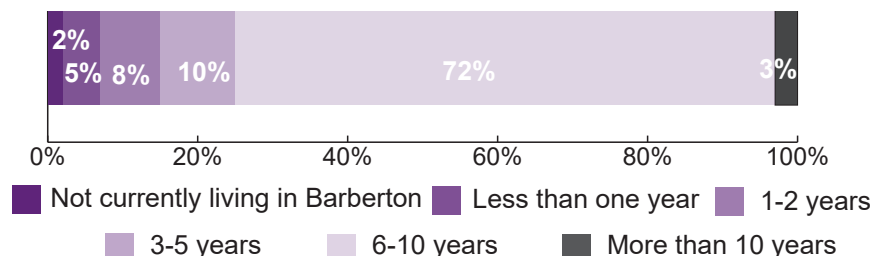
Additional Statistics

18% of the population is in poverty.

85% of the population age 25 or older has at least a high school diploma.

16% of the population age 25 or older has a bachelor's degree or higher.

Figure 3. Average Length of Residence in Barberton



"People who grew up here, live here, work here, take pride in being from here. There are a lot of people who step up and want to see the city get better due to that hometown pride."

—White Male

Ongoing Commitment

Using the data and key takeaways from the voices of the Barberton community, Barberton Community Foundation, the City of Barberton, Barberton City School District, and Summa Health, Barberton should focus on integrating its rich history with the passion and strengths of the current population. In doing so, Barberton can create a thriving community, where individuals have the financial resources to pursue their goals, the social opportunity to build relationships and thrive, and the confidence they desire in the resources, services, and messages provided by their city leadership. The commitment and energy expressed throughout the needs assessment process from all levels of the community demonstrated the potential to create a strong foundation, propelling Barberton forward on an actionable path toward a vision of a great place to raise a family, build a career, and explore the Magic City.