

CHAPTER TWO: REGIONAL OVERVIEW

- ✦ ***Historically the Valley has been defined by the rivers, the manufacturing base, and Route 8. These links have continued to provide a strong sense of a region among Valley communities.***

The rivers (the Naugatuck and Housatonic) give the Valley a natural definition, providing an environmental foundation for the Valley, and affording the region's manufacturers a source of power for their mills and factories. Manufacturing was the driving force of the region's economy for several generations. Industry provided the region a comfortable standard of living, and it provided a sound tax base for the towns in the Valley. Indeed, until very recently, the Valley's socioeconomic profile was almost completely blue collar with one generation after another growing up in the trades. These blue collar workers often would spend a lifetime in one of the many factories that dotted the rivers. Route 8 became the physical backbone of the Valley making it easier for people to get around the Valley. As manufacturing declined, Route 8 also made it possible for residents to commute outside the Valley for employment.

- ✦ ***While there is not one clear definition of which municipalities to include in the Valley, the most common definition includes Shelton, Derby, Ansonia, Seymour, Oxford, and Beacon Falls.***

While the majority of leaders and officials distinguish the Valley as including six towns (Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Derby, Oxford, Seymour, and Shelton), others use slightly different definitions. For example, TEAM's definition of the Lower Naugatuck Valley is largely determined by its service delivery area that extends south. It identifies the Valley as the six towns plus Bethany, Milford, Orange, and Woodbridge. On the north side of the Valley, there has been movement by Naugatuck to include itself with the Valley. To this end, Naugatuck has petitioned to become a member of the Valley Alliance and its mayor has made other overtures to create links to the Valley. Furthermore, a few leaders and residents among Mt. Auburn's interviews and focus groups questioned the inclusion of Oxford and Beacon Falls in the Valley. In the case of Oxford, some people view its distinct rural heritage and suburban nature as too dissimilar from the rest of the Valley.

- ✦ ***The Valley is in the middle of three economic regions -- New Haven, Bridgeport, and Waterbury. It should be considered its own distinct region and not purely as a subregion of New Haven.***

While it is increasingly important for municipalities to think regionally and to collaborate on regional initiatives, the Valley is a distinct subregion of Connecticut that is pulled in three different directions. Valley residents are divided by the malls in Milford and Waterbury, social and human services in Bridgeport, and art and higher education in New Haven. In addition, the Valley is part of numerous state and regional districts (e.g., tourism, transportation, social and human services) that further contribute to the lack of cohesion among the Valley and its residents. The connection to the New Haven Foundation through the Gates Fund is perhaps one

of the strongest links between the Valley and the New Haven region. Other regional connections have evolved based upon cultural, retail, and industrial patterns.

Following are a few examples of regional systems the Valley falls within.

- Both The Waterbury Symphony and the New Haven Symphony have a presence in the Valley.
- Workforce development efforts are managed through the Workplace, Inc. -- the regional employment board out of Bridgeport. Moreover, many of the larger employers -- particularly the newer corporations located in Shelton -- are oriented towards the Fairfield County economy.
- The towns are in two different counties -- Shelton is in Fairfield County while the other communities are in New Haven County.
- The towns are part of two separate economic development and planning regions -- the Naugatuck Valley Economic Development Region (centered in Waterbury) and the Valley Planning Area.
- In terms of commuting patterns, Valley residents commuting to work in the Bridgeport Labor Market Area (Bridgeport, Stratford, and Milford) far outnumber those working in the New Haven and Waterbury regions.

Live in:	1990				
	Work in Bridgeport	Work in Milford	Work in Stratford	Work in New Haven	Work in Waterbury
Ansonia	583	452	826	562	n/a
Beacon Falls	169	88	166	n/a	265
Derby	412	426	700	556	n/a
Oxford	320	n/a	248	205	173
Seymour	487	321	695	384	275
Shelton	3,075	883	2,154	526	n/a
Total	5,046	2,170	4,789	2,233	713

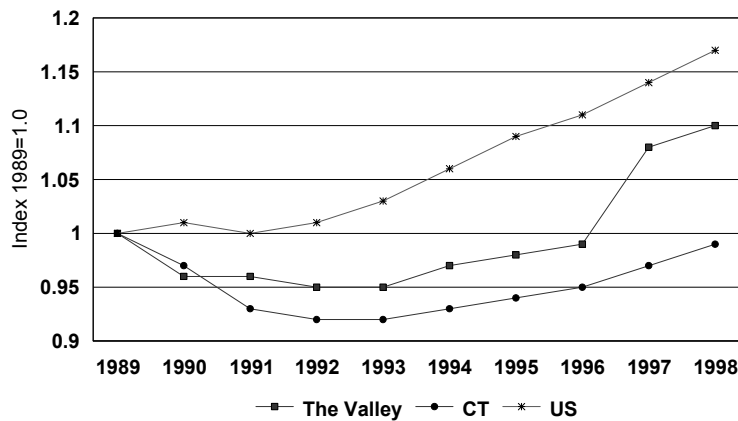
Source: US Census and Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development.
Note: Bridgeport, Milford, and Stratford are included in the Bridgeport Labor Market Area.

✦ *The Valley economy has emerged from a period of structural transition -- the manufacturing base has rebounded and the region has grown in service producing industries.*

Like most of the state of Connecticut, the Valley and its economy have overcome some of the devastating impacts of the recession. Many of the jobs once lost have been regained because of a recent upturn in manufacturing and the rise of Bridgeport Avenue as a center of corporate headquarters and knowledge-based industries. In fact, job growth in the last five years

has helped the Valley regain all of the jobs that it lost in the 1980s and early 1990s. Between 1994 and 1998, the Valley gained more than 4,000 jobs. This upward trend will likely continue through 1999 as the economy locally, statewide, and nationally continues to grow. (See Chart 1: Increase in Jobs in the Valley.)

Chart 1: Increase in Jobs in the Valley



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, CT Department of Labor

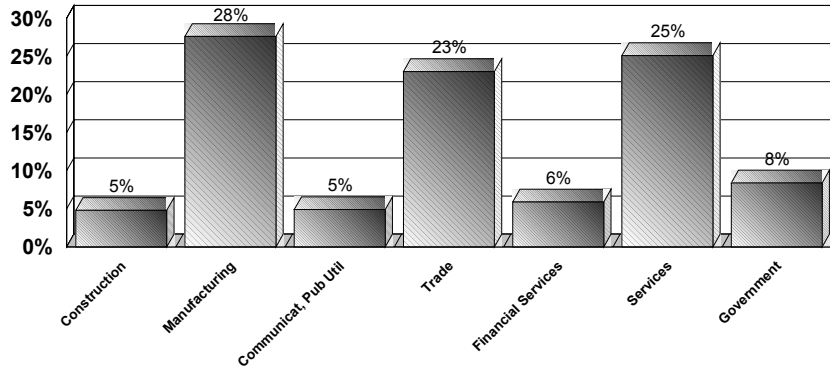
Behind much of the Valley’s job growth has been the tremendous development along Bridgeport Avenue in Shelton. Today, the area leading into and around Bridgeport Avenue is home to corporate and manufacturing offices of Pitney Bowes, Tetley USA, Black and Decker, Philips Medial Systems, PHS, American Skandia, Raytech Corporation, Image Graphics, Landstar Systems and thousands of new jobs. Many of these jobs are a result of overflows from the prosperous and booming “Gold Coast” -- the lower part of Fairfield County closely tied to New York City's economic base. Shelton’s undeveloped land, relatively low rent, available workforce, and favorable political environment have made it an attractive alternative for Gold Coast businesses and executives.

The three major engines of the Valley economy are manufacturing, trade, and services. The development along Bridgeport Avenue has contributed to the growth of all three. The services sector has grown 14 percent over the last five years and now makes up one-fourth of the Valley economy. Much of the growth in the service sector is a result of new computer, engineering, management, and other business service companies locating in the region to service corporate headquarters in Stamford and the rest of Fairfield County. (See Chart 2: Industry Sectors as Percent of Total Economy, 1998.)

The development of Route 8 opened up opportunities for wholesale trade to take root in the region. In 1998, wholesale and retail trade accounted for another one-fourth of the Valley economy. Wholesale distribution companies such as Pitney Bowes Shipping and Weighing have found the Valley a fitting location for their operations. A tremendous amount of new retail trade has sprouted up along Bridgeport Avenue as new businesses and workers have increased the

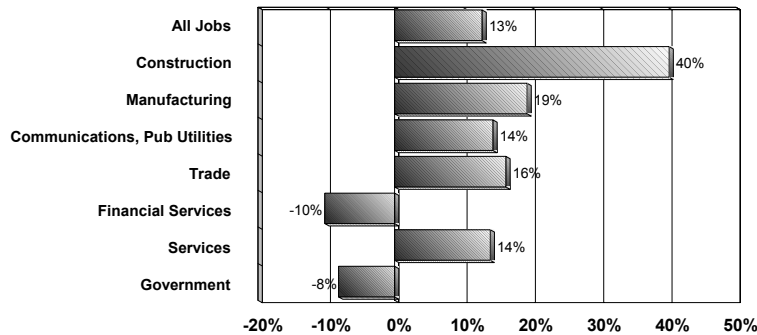
number of people consuming retail goods. (See Chart 3: Growth of Jobs by Industry 1994-1998 in the Valley.)

Chart 2: Industry Sectors as Percent of Total Valley Economy



Source: CT Department of Labor
 Note: Trade includes wholesale and retail trade.

Chart 3: Growth of Jobs by Industry 1994-1998 in the Valley

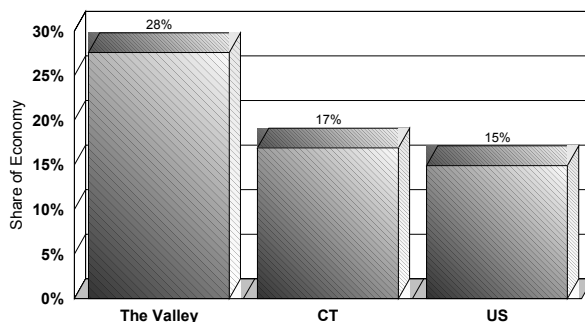


Source: CT Department of Labor
 Note: Trade includes wholesale and retail trade.

However, the real story in the last five years has been the rebound of manufacturing in the Valley. While not regaining all of the jobs it lost over a decade ago, manufacturing continues to maintain its strong foothold in the region's economic base. In 1998, 28 percent of all Valley jobs were in manufacturing. This concentration is almost two times as great as the concentration of manufacturing in the U.S. as a whole (15 percent). Again, Shelton's boomlet has driven much of manufacturing's resurgence. Since 1994, the Valley's manufacturing sector has increased by 1,610 jobs, or 19 percent. The increase in Shelton's manufacturing base since

1994 (1,490 jobs) accounts for 93 percent of the Valley's total increase in manufacturing jobs. Some of these manufacturing jobs can be attributed to companies with corporate headquarters in the region, such as Pitney Bowes and Tetley Tea, that have little in terms of production capacity. Nonetheless, there is still a critical mass of manufacturing production in the Valley beyond these major corporate entities. Of particular importance are those components of the sector with high concentrations of employment as well as higher than average wage rates. For example, the Valley enjoys a high concentration of jobs in the metals and machinery industry (average annual wage of \$48,047), electrical equipment industry (\$82,990), and other equipment and instrument machinery (\$60,333). Each one of these industries has higher annual wage rates than the average for all jobs in the region (\$45,310).¹ (See Chart 4: Relative Importance of Manufacturing, 1998.)

Chart 4: Relative Importance of Manufacturing in 1998



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, CT Department of Labor

- ✦ *Even though the Valley's economic base as a whole has regained jobs and grown since the recession, Shelton's performance masks the economic underperformance of other Valley towns.*

Without Shelton's explosive job growth over the last five years, the Valley economy would have lost 270 jobs. Instead, Shelton's 27.4 growth rate in jobs (4,320 jobs) led the Valley to gain 4,050 jobs as a whole. The loss leaders in the Valley between 1994 and 1998 were Ansonia (which lost 210 jobs) and Derby (which lost 430 jobs). Both Beacon Falls and Seymour gained a marginal number of jobs, 30 and 50 jobs, respectively. Only Oxford's increase of 290 jobs between 1994 and 1998 approached the rate of growth experienced in Shelton.

Moreover, it is likely that many of the beneficiaries of the new jobs in the region do not live in the Valley towns, or are newcomers who have recently moved to the region. While there is no available data on where employees of companies located in the Valley live, there is

¹ The annual average wage rates were derived from the Connecticut Department of Labor's 1996 Covered Employment and Wages by Industry for the Southwest Service Delivery Area (which includes Ansonia, Derby, Seymour, and Shelton). The wage rates for the metals and machinery industry and equipment and instrument machinery industry are averages for multiple industries.

anecdotal evidence that many of the jobs in the corporate parks of Shelton are being filled by newcomers, or by employees who live in Fairfield County.

While most employment indicators show the region as a whole in a relatively good economic position, other indicators are evidence of a wide disparity in wealth and prosperity among individual Valley towns. A May 1997 report published by Griffin Hospital and Healthy Valley, *Improving Life and Health in Our Community*, shows that 11 percent of residents in 1994 still had incomes below \$15,000, and 4,800 Valley households had incomes below the poverty line. The same report notes that the number of food stamp recipients increased by 33 percent and those persons receiving Medicaid increased by 17 percent.²

Further underscoring the disparity of economic performance in the Valley is the widely variant economic infrastructure among towns in the Valley. A report on the Naugatuck Valley by Gimpel & Associates³ identifies Shelton and Oxford as the only Valley towns to have strong economic characteristics and potential for economic growth. The report lauds Shelton and Oxford's highly educated and young labor force, available tracts of empty land for development, and large share of residents employed as professionals or as managers-executives. Ansonia and Derby, on the other hand, are singled out as having limited opportunities for economic growth.

It is no secret that some of the Valley's towns still suffer the effects of the recession and the severe downturn in the region's manufacturing base in the 1980s and early 1990s. The disparities between the Valley's economically robust towns and those towns that have languished manifest themselves in many ways.

- While Shelton's and Oxford's unemployment rates have fallen below state averages, Ansonia's and Derby's rates are consistently higher than state averages. Both Ansonia and Derby had higher unemployment rates (5.0 and 4.6 percent, respectively) than the statewide average and were the only towns in the Valley with higher rates than the nation as a whole (4.5 percent). Shelton and Oxford, on the other hand, had relatively low rates of 3.2 and 3.1 percent, respectively, in 1998.

Table 4: Unemployment Rates in the Valley, 1998				
	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate (%)
Ansonia	8,701	8,256	436	5.0
Beacon Falls	2,844	2,741	103	3.6
Derby	6,369	6,078	291	4.6
Oxford	4,810	4,662	148	3.1
Seymour	7,567	7,278	289	3.8
Shelton	19,684	19,056	628	3.2
Connecticut	1,709,300	1,651,900	57,400	3.4

² Griffin Hospital and Healthy Valley, *Improving Life and Health in Our Community*, May 1997.

³ James Gimpel & Associates, *Report on the Naugatuck Valley Corridor by Census Tract, 1990-2007*, March 1998.

Source: Connecticut Department of Labor.
 Note: 1998 is the most recent annual average available. Monthly rates in 1999 are available online at www.dol.ct.us.

- In terms of poverty, Ansonia and Derby again suffer disproportionately in the Valley. Ansonia residents suffered poverty rates three times those of Shelton in 1998. And Ansonia's rate of children in poverty was 3.5 times the rate of poverty among school age children in Shelton in 1995.

	School Age Poverty Rate, 1995 (%)	Overall Poverty Rate, 1998 (%)
Ansonia	15.3	7.6
Beacon Falls	N/A*	1.7
Derby	13.4	6.3
Oxford	1.7	1.7
Seymour	7.0	4.6
Shelton	4.4	2.5
Connecticut	13.0	6.6

Source: US Census Bureau and Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development
 Note: Children's Poverty Rate data is only available for 1995.
 *Data is collected by school district, Beacon Falls data is not available.

- Of the six Valley towns, only Shelton residents have a per capita income above the state average. Ansonia residents earned \$8,187 less per capita and Derby residents earned \$5,393 less per capita than the average resident in the state in 1998.

	Per Capita Income, 1998
Ansonia	\$18,891
Beacon Falls	\$23,996
Derby	\$21,685
Oxford	\$24,513
Seymour	\$23,609
Shelton	\$28,837
Connecticut	\$27,078

✦ ***The downtowns of several municipalities present a very serious challenge to economic and community revitalization.***

The downtown centers of Shelton, Derby, and Ansonia have suffered significant physical decline over the last decade. They have experienced loss of retail and commercial activities that has led to empty storefronts, vacant lots, and a shrinking customer base. Seymour's downtown, on the other hand, has begun to turn around with the emergence of new enterprises in the collectible and antique trades. With Seymour as the exception, a number of past efforts to redevelop the downtowns in the Valley have met with little success. New efforts, however, have emerged in Shelton where an ambitious plan to redevelop warehouses and vacant buildings on and near the downtown waterfront is beginning to come to fruition. Derby has had difficulty in the past jump-starting downtown revitalization efforts, but now is gearing up to conduct environmental remediation on 40 acres of downtown brownfield sites. Ansonia's efforts have been focused on the rehabilitation of some upper Main Street buildings into mixed use, commercial, and residential space. In addition, Beacon Falls has a new citizens group, Concerned Citizens for Tomorrow's Downtown, that has begun working on downtown issues.

✦ ***A demographic surge of newcomers to the Valley has created both a sense of excitement and tension.***

The "newcomers" have come predominantly from Fairfield County to escape the high housing costs and high cost of living. Route 8 affords them easy access to jobs that many hold in some of the corporate and larger manufacturing firms in Stamford, Bridgeport, and the rest of lower Fairfield County. Also, the newcomers commute to the Valley to work in the companies that have located on Bridgeport Avenue. The result of so much in-migration has meant excitement for the new energy, ideas, and resources that these new residents and workers bring. However, it has also created tension with an older more working-class population that is somewhat threatened by a younger and more educated group. The first indication of this tension showed up in a 1993 demographic profile sponsored by Griffin Hospital and the Greater Valley Chamber of Commerce. The report explicitly identifies "the need to integrate the new bedroom community residents with the Valley's traditional residents, and to invite them to become an integral part of our community, to volunteer here, to become active in local government, to participate in community activities and to shop here and use community services."⁴ A resident survey completed in 1995 also shows that longer-term residents rate the Valley higher as a place to shop and work than new residents.⁵

Some of the data that highlight the influx of newcomers include:

- Four out of ten residents have lived in the Valley ten years or less as noted in the Valley's All-American City application.

⁴ William Powanda, Economic and Demographic Profile of the Valley Community, issued by Griffin Health Services Corporation in cooperation with the Greater Valley Chamber of Commerce, May 1993.

⁵ Smith & Company, *Healthy Valley 2000: Community Leader Survey*, prepared for Valley United Way, June 1995.

- The Valley's population has increased by 1,692 people since the last census even though the state's overall population has declined. Moreover, this increase represents a Valley population growth rate that is 4.7 times that of the state.⁶
- The Valley's population is projected to continue to grow by almost 1,000 persons between 1998 and 2003 according to National Decision Systems.
- Home sales have doubled in the Valley in the last seven years and the median price of home values in certain sections of Shelton and Oxford has been pushed up by an influx of transplants from outside the region.⁷
- Three of the Valley's four major high schools showed increases in enrollment from the 1992-1993 academic year to the 1997-1998 academic year. Ansonia High School's enrollment increased by 3 percent over the five years; Shelton High School increased by 15.3 percent; and Seymour High School increased by 19.8 percent (Oxford students attend Seymour High School). Comparable data for Derby High School is not readily available.⁸
- A similar increase in the Valley's elementary and middle schools is noted by education leaders. For example, the Superintendent of Oxford Schools notes that an influx of new families from Fairfield County has caused a noticeable growth spurt in the number of children entering the lower grades in Oxford's schools. The same dynamic is noted in Shelton. Besides anecdotal information, however, other data traditionally used to capture these changes is less readily available because of grade reconfigurations and, as a result, incomparable samples across years.⁹

✦ ***People inside and outside the Valley perceive the area as being somewhat insular and suffering from an inferiority complex. On the other hand, the Valley also has a reputation as being a community of fighters.***

Perhaps because of its topography and physical landscape, it was natural that the Valley looked inward and developed a strong sense of community, one that was not terribly outward-looking and progressive. Also, the recession in the late 1980s and early 1990s was particularly hard for the Valley. Because the economy was so reliant on manufacturing and because manufacturing experienced a serious decline, unemployment skyrocketed to close to 18 percent. An inferiority complex emerged because of the decline in the industrial base, the Valley's blue collar persona, and the lack of a vibrant, major city. The economy was effectively in a state of shock.

Nonetheless, the people and the towns of the Valley remained steadfast and eventually came out of the recession perhaps somewhat more resilient than when they went into the recession. Rather than leave the Valley for better job opportunities and healthier economies, people stayed and found a way to make a living. Shelton clearly took an aggressive, proactive

⁶ National Decision Systems population estimates (1990-1998) prepared for Griffin Hospital, September 1998.

⁷ Valley All America City Application, 1999.

⁸ Connecticut Department of Education data for Derby High School is not applicable due to grade changes at the high school between these years.

⁹ Similar Connecticut Department of Education data for most of the Valley's K-8 middle and elementary schools is not applicable due to grade changes as well.

economic development stance and the benefits of the town's successes extended into other Valley communities. Seymour also gradually gained back some of its lost manufacturing base.

✦ *The lack of a daily newspaper has had a modest, but important, impact on the Valley.*

Daily newspapers give a region an identity and they create a powerful and effective means of communication among residents and towns. While it had a daily newspaper, the Valley benefited the way most communities would -- coverage of the key issues, features on community leaders, stories on individual towns, etc. The paper helped create a real sense of the Valley as a group of connected communities. Without the newspaper, however, it has left a void in the way in which the Valley identifies itself and how people and municipalities communicate with one another. Fortunately, as noted elsewhere, cooperation and increased collaboration among towns and organizations have helped mitigate some of the negative effects of not having a daily newspaper.

CHAPTER THREE: POPULATIONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven has a distinct mission as a community foundation to enhance the quality of life among residents, especially those with pressing needs in the community. In keeping with this mission, Chapter Three profiles four subgroups in the Valley that stand out in this respect: the working poor and poor, minorities, youth, and senior citizens.

Working Poor and Poor

Definition of Working Poor and Poor

As mentioned earlier in the report, poverty within the Valley is concentrated in a few locations. In 1998, Ansonia had a 7.6 percent rate of poverty, higher than the rate of 6.6 for the state as a whole.¹⁰ The town of Derby, the southeast quadrant of Shelton, and a small segment of Seymour also have significant concentrations of poverty. Residents who fall within this definition had an income of less than \$8,050 per year in 1998 (for a family of four the poverty threshold is \$16,450). In 1998, there were an estimated 3,919 persons living in poverty in the Valley (or 4.1 percent of the total Valley population).

On the other hand, the working poor is a larger and harder to define subgroup in the Valley. In general, the working poor are those Valley residents teetering on the brink of poverty.

- ✦ *The Valley's working poor can be grouped into a few categories: people earning low wages, the underemployed, vulnerable blue collar workers, and former welfare recipients with low-wage jobs.*

There are a number of indications that the working poor in the Valley is a significant subgroup of Valley residents. One sign is the low wages of many of the new jobs in the Valley's growing sectors. A person working full-time in a retail job earns an average of \$21,020 per year, barely over the federal poverty line of \$16,450 for a family of four. Another sign is the imminent layoffs among some of the significant employers in the region. For example, Sikorsky Aircraft has gone through a round of layoffs and is expected to announce more. Employers like Sikorsky offer Valley residents high paying jobs that are difficult to replace. A third sign is the decline in the Valley's welfare cases. A TEAM report indicates that the number of welfare cases in the Valley has dropped between 300 and 400 cases. Many of these former welfare recipients are now working, but still live close to, if not below, the poverty level.

¹⁰ Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development 1998 estimates.

Workforce

- ★ ***The Valley's working poor suffer from a mismatch between their skills and the local economy's new skill requirements.***

Valley leaders note the need to focus on training and retraining Valley residents for the new jobs in the Valley economy. Highlighting this mismatch between the skills of the worker and needs of the employer, The Workplace, a Bridgeport-based agency overseeing most workforce development activities in the Valley, states more generally that "many of Southwestern Connecticut's residents do not have the necessary skills to fill skill shortages in the region."¹¹ Connecticut Business & Industry Association's annual employer survey shows the number of employers concerned about the lack of qualified workers almost doubling between 1997 and 1998. Training, Education, and Manpower, Inc. (TEAM) reiterates this concern in its community action plan citing that "many low-income adults and TANF recipients do not have a defined sense of self or career paths as they relate to the workplace."¹²

One category of skills mismatch is those highly-skilled blue collar workers who were once downsized, never retrained, and, as a result, are stuck in low wage jobs that do not match their skill level. Another category is marginalized workers, such as former welfare recipients, who have not been able to escape their low-wage, dead end jobs. Many of these workers have been trained for new careers but have been unable to move along a career ladder and get out from under their minimum wage jobs.

- ★ ***The working poor have access to a number of workforce development programs in the Valley, chief among them are those operated by TEAM and Valley Regional Adult Education.***

The major providers of Valley workforce development programs are TEAM and Valley Regional Adult Education. TEAM's strengths are pre-employment and basic skills training programs targeting chronically unemployed residents and underemployed workers. TEAM operates six training programs. It offers Microsoft applications and customer service programs for economically disadvantaged residents in the Valley -- many of the trainees have found jobs that pay \$10 per hour. TEAM also operates the Valley's TFA¹³ job readiness programs. It has placed 70 of the first 108 job readiness trainees into jobs. Other TEAM programs include construction trades training for women and customized training with two Seymour companies.

Valley Regional Adult Education (VRAE) provides English as a Second Language (ESL) and General Equivalency Diploma (GED) programs to Valley residents. Its ESL programs serve approximately 450 residents per year. VRAE also has developed basic education programs that have been customized on-site for Valley employers, a unique niche for an adult education program. Employers that have used VRAE's customized approach include Basset, Sikorsky, Viatram, and others.

¹¹ The Workplace, Inc., *1999 Plan*.

¹² Training, Education and Manpower, Inc., *Team Community Action Plan 1999-2000*, June 1999.

¹³ Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) is Connecticut's welfare program for women and children.

Other workforce development providers in the Valley include Curtisey Corporation, Birmingham Group's Employment Opportunities program, and the Ansonia Job Center. Curtisey Corporation is a training business -- training residents in lead paint abatement, maintenance, and other construction-related skills for its housing and commercial rehabilitation project. It is a subsidiary of the Ansonia Housing Authority. Birmingham Group's Employment Opportunities program provides job opportunities to people with mental and physical disabilities. Services include career counseling, job placement, job coaching, and other follow-up services. Between 1997 and 1998, 61 individuals were placed in new positions with employers throughout the Valley. The Ansonia Job Center is a satellite center of Connecticut Works' one stop career centers. The Center provides guidance on such job-seeker issues as resume preparation, interviewing skills, and job search.

✦ *While the above programs are all centered in the Valley, the region's community colleges have little penetration in the Valley.*

Naugatuck Valley Community Technical College has a limited role in the Valley. Housatonic Community Technical College and Southern Connecticut State University also have limited connections to Valley workforce issues. O'Brien Regional Vocational Technical School covers some of this void by providing programs in the technical and skilled trades, but is limited to high school youth.

✦ *Employer demand for workers is incredibly strong providing many opportunities for Valley job seekers.*

Valley workers do not face a shortage of jobs options. In fact, the tightening labor market has created opportunities for those historically not in the labor force, such as welfare recipients, residents with multiple barriers to employment, and the chronically unemployed. This new shift in the labor market has replaced the urgency for job creation with an urgency to move those at the low end of the labor market (e.g., the working poor) into better jobs and careers.

There are many indications of strong employer demand for workers. A survey conducted for the Naugatuck Valley Corridor Economic Development Strategy Report shows Valley employers ranking education and labor training as their highest economic development priority.¹⁴

A 1998 and 1999 needs assessment conducted for The Workplace (the region's workforce development policy board) cites Southwestern Connecticut's urgent need to find skilled workers to fill jobs openings.¹⁵ And, Mt. Auburn's individual interviews with employers suggest that companies are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit employees.

¹⁴ DeCarlo & Doll, Inc., et. al., *Naugatuck Valley Corridor Economic Development Strategy Report*, prepared for Naugatuck Valley Project and Shelton Economic Development Corporation, January 1999.

¹⁵ The Workplace, Inc., *1998 Workforce Development Needs Assessment Update for Southwestern Connecticut*, February 1998, and The Workplace, Inc., *1999 Plan*.

- ✦ ***The Valley faces two major challenges in terms of creating a workforce development system that meets the needs of its working poor: no resources are focused specifically on the Valley and there are many uncertainties in light of the new Workforce Investment Act.***

The first challenge relates to competing for resources and attention. The Valley's workforce development stakeholders continually have to negotiate among three different competing regions -- Bridgeport, New Haven, and Waterbury. The Workplace, based in Bridgeport, administers and sets policy for many of the Valley's skills and occupational training programs for low-income and unemployed workers. New Haven's office of the Department of Social Services administers the Valley's TANF job training programs. Naugatuck Valley Community Technical College and Housatonic Community Technical College provide the region with community college programs but are oriented toward the greater Waterbury and Bridgeport regions, respectively.

Second, the Workforce Investment Act creates fundamental changes in the delivery of workforce development services. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 transitions Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA)¹⁶ funding into a single block grant -- 1999 will be the last year of funding under the old JTPA formula. In general, WIA attempts to better meet the needs of job seekers and employers on the local level by authorizing more choice and autonomy for job seekers, encouraging a "work first" approach, and consolidating funding streams for training services. Overall, the delivery of training services shifts from a contract to a voucher-based system. This signals a shift away from the traditional, stable stream of funding for many of the Valley's training programs. One implication may be a fundamental restructuring in the Valley's current landscape of workforce development providers; some may get out of the business while new providers may enter.

- ✦ ***At the moment, there is no unified regional workforce strategy in the Valley.***

The Valley, as most communities, has yet to integrate efforts to train and develop the workforce with efforts to strengthen existing business and attract new businesses to the region. There are many benefits to creating an effective linkage between workforce development and economic development. In general, workers are trained for jobs that are already available in the economy, workers feel more empowered by the skills they are receiving, and training providers gain confidence from industry because they are training people ready-made for the market.

Child Care

- ✦ ***The Valley's working poor families often have to struggle to afford child care.***

The state's child care assistance program provides child care subsidies to families earning less than 50 percent of the state's median income and to families in the state's welfare program (Temporary Family Assistance). The eligibility guidelines for working poor families, especially

¹⁶ JTPA has been the nation's largest funding source for skills and occupational training programs for economically disadvantaged adults and youth.

current and former TFA families who are working, have become somewhat more generous. More income earning families are eligible for subsidies.

Despite this increase in eligibility, however, the high costs of child care easily can dilute the benefits of earnings from low-wage employment. For example, a monthly state subsidy of \$325 per child for infant care in a center may only cover one-half of actual costs. In addition, working families from Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Derby, and Seymour receive lower reimbursement rates for state-subsidized child care vouchers than families from Shelton and Oxford.¹⁷ A working family in Ansonia receives \$50 less per month from state child care subsidies than a working family in Shelton.¹⁸

✦ *Advocates and professionals express concern that working poor parents are often put in an untenable situation by having to choose between a provider based on affordability rather than quality.*

A small co-payment or even the \$50 difference in subsidized reimbursement rates between families in Ansonia and Shelton can be a strain on a family's pocketbook. As is often the case for a working poor family, affordability determines choice. Parents' choices also are constrained by proximity of the child care provider to home, work, school, and transportation. Getting to child care is not simply a matter of going from home to child care, but rather from home to child care, from child care to work, from work to school, from school to child care, and from child care to home. And, even though the overall child care vacancy rate may indicate sufficient availability for the Valley as a whole, a closer look at data indicates that some towns such as Derby have limited capacity relative to Shelton, Seymour, and Ansonia. (See Table 7.)

	Infant Care	Preschool Age Care	School Age Care	Total All Care
Ansonia	82	203	104	389
Beacon Falls	30	86	55	171
Derby	41	123	95	259
Oxford	46	98	139	283
Seymour	52	120	218	390
Shelton	276	421	247	944
Valley Total	527	1,051	858	2,436
Source: Infoline, Child Care Capacity and Availability Statistics, September 1999.				

¹⁷ Child care reimbursement rates are based on cost of living indices.

¹⁸ This difference is based upon the level of state subsidy for an infant in a child care center.

✦ ***The shortage of licensed infant care is one of the most critical childcare needs in the Valley.***

Licensed capacity and vacancy data collected for the Valley indicates that the three major categories of child care (infant, pre-school, and school age) have a significant number of vacancies. The Valley's overall vacancy rate for licensed child care as of September 1999 was 17 percent, a rate that does not indicate severe shortages. (See Table 8.)

Table 8:			
Licensed Child Care Capacity and Vacancies in the Valley, 1999			
	Licensed Capacity	Vacancies	Vacancy Rate (%)
Infant Care	527	87	16.5
Preschool Care	1,051	200	19.0
School Age Care	858	128	14.9
Total All Care	2,436	415	17.0
Source: Infoline, Child Care Capacity and Availability Statistics, September 1999.			
Note: Each category of child care includes aggregated data for centers, group homes, and homes.			

When people refer to a shortage of child care often they are referring to the lack of licensed care in the Valley. Presumably, a large portion of the demand for child care in the Valley is met by informal, unlicensed care. The quality of unlicensed, informal child care can vary. Some of the factors influencing quality include lack of training among providers, inadequate space, improper equipment, and the low wages earned by child care providers.

As is common in other communities areas across the state, the supply of licensed child care slots is most limited in the infant care category. Infant care is the most expensive form of child care to provide because of lower child to staff ratios (i.e., higher labor costs) and expensive equipment requirements. As of September 1999 there were only 527 infant care slots in the Valley. Pre-school age care had a capacity of 1,051 total slots and school age care had a capacity of 858 slots.

✦ ***Another major deficiency in the child care system is off-hour availability.***

There is little evening and weekend care catering to late night shift and other work that occurs during non-weekday hours. Most of this need is met by informal child care arrangements such as family and friends. The Valley has few institutional and licensed child care resources for workers needing child care at these nontraditional times.

Housing

- ✦ ***Residents and leaders in the Valley perceive affordable housing to be a gap in resources for the working poor.***

Housing leaders and advocates, along with many of the people in Mt. Auburn's interviews, identified affordable housing as an unmet need for the working poor in the Valley. A TEAM reports notes that average Valley rental rates can take up as much as 75 percent of after-tax earned income of a working poor family.¹⁹

Governmental affordable housing subsidies make up only 2,594 of the Valley's total 39,178 housing units. This proportion of subsidized units (6.6 percent) is less than the state as a whole (11.2 percent). Only Ansonia's proportion of affordable housing (15.6 percent) is higher than the statewide average. It accounts for almost one-half of the Valley's subsidized units. In general, the demand for affordable housing outstrips supply. Waiting lists are long for Section 8 rental vouchers and project based housing. (See Table 9.)

	Total Housing Units	Total Assisted Housing Units	Percent Assisted (%)
Ansonia	7,720	1,205	15.6
Beacon Falls	2,157	41	1.9
Derby	5,425	468	8.6
Oxford	3,356	49	1.5
Seymour	6,234	295	4.7
Shelton	14,286	536	3.8
Valley	39,178	2,594	6.6
Connecticut	1,382,102	154,942	11.2

Source: Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, 1998 estimates.
Note: Assisted housing units include governmentally assisted, deed restricted, and CHFA/FMHA mortgage.

- ✦ ***A relatively small number of subsidized units, combined with high rental rates, increasing prices for homes, and an overall old housing stock limit the affordable housing opportunities for many Valley residents, poor and working poor.***

The first, and obvious, reason for the Valley's limited affordable housing is that four of the six Valley towns have a limited number of subsidized units. Only Ansonia's share exceeds the statewide average while Derby's share at least approaches this average. Beacon Falls, Oxford, Seymour, and Shelton all have very small proportions relative to the state. Second, rental rates in the Valley still remain at elevated rates held over from the housing boom in the late 1980s. Housing officials observe that rental rates never had a comparable decrease in value

¹⁹ Training, Education and Manpower, Inc., *Team Community Action Plan 1999-2000*, June 1999.

when the market bottomed out in the early to mid-1990s. Third, the region's median prices for home sales have been increasing. Between 1997 and 1999, the median sales price for residential homes increased by \$14,000 in Ansonia, \$8,000 in Seymour, \$4,900 in Derby, and \$4,000 in Beacon Falls.²⁰ Fourth, at least three of the Valley communities, Ansonia, Derby, and Beacon Falls, have high proportions of old housing stock. The old housing stock in these communities, not a negative factor in and of itself, has considerable problems with lead paint and asbestos.

There is a waiting list for Section 8 rental subsidies in the Valley. Low-income residents who have Section 8 certificates report difficulty finding apartments that qualify. Landlords are reported to be reluctant to accept Section 8 because of the strict standards for property inspections.

✦ ***The Ansonia Housing Authority (AHA) is the major engine behind Ansonia's relatively high rate of affordable housing.***

The Ansonia Housing Authority operates in excess of 600 units of affordable housing between its Section 8 subsidized rental vouchers and project-based units. AHA is by far the largest housing authority in the Valley. In addition, AHA has 50 people participating in its family self-sufficiency program (a HUD-sponsored program helping families obtain work and become homeowners). It also operates Curtisey Corporation (a nonprofit construction, job training, and property management company employing 25 people full- and part-time), and sponsors human service and enrichment activities such as the Tinney Community Center. AHA's Curtisey Corporation has put a bid into the state of Connecticut to manage the state's entire portfolio of Section 8 projects. Curtisey Corporation currently has contracts to manage 300 units of property from Waterbury to Ansonia.

✦ ***The potential threat to relocating the region's one homeless shelter may further reduce housing options for individuals and families in need of emergency housing.***

There is some pressure to relocate the region's only family homeless shelter from downtown Derby to another area close by. The Area Congregations Together shelter has 36 beds for men, women, and children and serves 230 guests a year. The shelter allows residents to stay for 90 days. The Valley YMCA's 29-unit, single room occupancy (SRO) housing offers many of the shelter's former clients permanent housing options. Umbrella, Birmingham Group's domestic violence program that offers temporary shelter, crisis intervention, and case management services to victims of family violence, provides emergency shelter for families who are victims of domestic violence.

²⁰ Median sales prices in 1999 are for the period of January through October; 1997 is January through December. From The Warren Group, <http://rers.thewarrengroup.com>.

Healthcare

- ✦ ***The Valley has two strong leaders in the healthcare field, Griffin Hospital and Birmingham Group. Each is noted as a model for healthcare delivery in its field and each serves a large number of the Valley's working poor.***

The region has very strong healthcare institutions that have been creating innovative programs for serving the needs of the community. As the largest healthcare facility in the Valley, Griffin Hospital provides in-patient and emergency care, oversees research and public health projects, and provides civic leadership to the health and human services community. Its patient centered model of care delivery is world renown. The Hospital's Valley Parish Nurse Program, operated through the Valley's religious congregations, contacts over 10,000 people during the year to provide preventative and basic healthcare to many of the Valley's working poor and senior citizens.

Birmingham Group is an umbrella organization that oversees a number of well-respected healthcare initiatives in the Valley. Valley Mental Health (VMH) is the Valley's regional mental health authority providing counseling, medication, vocational rehabilitation, social, and other support services to people with mental illness and disabilities. VMH's Valley Social Club is a statewide model of consumer empowerment and advocacy. Umbrella is Birmingham Group's domestic violence program that offers temporary shelter, crisis intervention, and case management services to victims of family violence. Leaders in the health and human service field cite Umbrella as a program with widespread influence. And, the Valley Substance Abuse Action Council is a regional council that sponsors prevention, advocacy, and education around substance abuse issues. Its biannual survey tracks use of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs among Valley youth.

- ✦ ***Gaps that remain in the Valley's healthcare system are largely those experienced by the working poor.***

One of working poor's biggest healthcare issues is the lack of health insurance. While there is no hard data as to how many people in the Valley are without health insurance, there is a strong agreement among health and human service leaders that many people in low-wage, service sector jobs are medically underserved. This concern was shared by a wide range of citizens and leaders such as public officials, clergy in Mt. Auburn's clergy focus group, economic development professionals, and healthcare consumers.

In essence, the low-wage working poor in the Valley who are without employer insurance earn too much income to be eligible for state-sponsored care and they earn too little to deal with major medical issues or any unexpected life circumstances (medical emergencies, child care, etc.). One director of a community based program noted the difficulty her clients have had coming up with enough money to cover an \$80 co-pay needed for preventative care at the Valley's new low-cost community dental center.

Even those who do have some health insurance coverage, albeit limited, have difficulty affording co-payments for prescriptions, preventative care, and even primary care. For example, the majority of constituents in Mt. Auburn's mental health consumer focus group mentioned

difficulty with managing Medicaid's and Medicare's increases in the co-payment levels for medication. Others mentioned the untenable situation of transitioning to part-time work (as a step toward better overall self-improvement) while losing Medicaid or Medicare benefits because of earnings.

✦ ***The Community Health Connection and the Valley Parish Nurse Program are two low-cost and free medical services in the Valley that meet some of this gap.***

Community Health Connection is a satellite office of Hill Health Center of New Haven that offers primary medical services to Medicare, Medicaid, and City Welfare recipients. Medical services include pediatrics, adult medicine, nursing, and nutrition counseling. The Valley Parish Nurse Program provides registered nurses to work with members of faith communities. Registered nurses work as health educators, health counselors, and referral resources in their efforts to promote health and foster preventative medicine practices among members of faith communities.

✦ ***The state's shift to a managed care system and retraction of funds has forced local health providers to find new sources of funding, reshape services, and collaborate with other agencies to fill gaps in healthcare.***

Healthcare providers have had to adapt to changes in state healthcare policy and in the healthcare market in the last few years. Shrinking state dollars (for example, decreases in Medicaid reimbursement rates) have forced healthcare providers with public health missions to look beyond state funds to continue their programs. Providers have found that they need to develop new relationships with corporations, foundations, and others to survive financially. Local healthcare providers also have had to begin to quantify and track the impacts of their interventions. The managed care system requires that healthcare providers not only provide services at very competitive rates, but also show results. For example, local mental health providers must track the outcomes of their interventions with patients, often forcing a provider to quantify improvements such as the mental health of a patient. Healthcare providers also have had to learn to fill gaps and increase efficiencies by collaborating with other providers. Birmingham Group established a partnership with two other local mental health authorities in order to compete with private agencies under the state's new managed care system. This alliance, Communicare, uses economies of scale to offer more services at competitive prices to its mental health consumers in the Valley.

✦ ***Despite this changing landscape, an analysis by Healthy Valley 2000 found that the Valley performed on par with the state as a whole on many measures of health.***

Healthy Valley 2000's report released in 1998 shows that, in general, the Valley has a relatively similar incidence of disease and health-related deaths as the state as a whole.²¹ In fact, while the report found that the Valley had a slightly higher overall crude death rate than the state as a whole in 1996, the difference was not found to be statistically significant. The report concludes that the Valley had a statistically significant lower incidence of death from invasive cancers, pneumonia, influenza, and HIV infection. Other areas where the Valley performed well

²¹ Pezhman Eliaszadeh, David Katz, and James Jekel, *Valley Health Profile*, Griffin Hospital, July 1998.

relative to the state included birth weight among babies of teenage mothers, and deaths related to motor vehicle accidents, drowning, falls, fires, suicide, and homicide. Categories where the Valley performed worse than the state as a whole included incidence of death from malignant neoplasm and breast cancer among women.

- ✦ ***Two other gaps in the delivery of healthcare services in the Valley are inpatient substance abuse treatment services, and limited services for residents with a dual diagnosis of mental illness and addiction to alcohol or drugs.***

The Lower Naugatuck Valley Council on Alcoholism and Drugs is the major provider of outpatient substance abuse treatment services in the Valley. It provides group therapy, individual, and family counseling on an outpatient basis. The Valley still lacks in-patient substance abuse recovery, and treatment programs. Valley residents have to travel to New Haven, Bridgeport, or as far away as Stonington to receive appropriate inpatient treatment.

The Valley also lacks treatment for patients with a dual diagnosis (mental illness and addiction to illegal substances). The Birmingham Group is the major provider of mental health services in the Valley, with some supplemental support provided by Catholic Family Services. Neither Birmingham Group nor the Lower Naugatuck Valley Council on Alcoholism and Drugs has the resources to deal effectively with Valley residents with a dual diagnosis. Furthermore, the effectiveness of any sort of delivery system or strategy to care for the Valley residents who have a dual diagnosis is compromised by a divide between the Birmingham Group and the Lower Naugatuck Valley Council on Alcoholism and Drugs.

Transportation

- ✦ ***Problems related to ready access to transportation was one of the most common themes in all of the interviews.***

Transportation affects the ability of poor and working poor residents to access jobs in the region, to access training opportunities, to access recreational opportunities, and to fully appreciate the quality of life in the Valley. Most residents in the Valley rely on cars to get to and from jobs, child care, training, and schooling. However, many times low-income people have to rely on public transit to negotiate this increasingly complex matrix of interchanges. For example, it is not uncommon for a welfare recipient to balance a number of activities at one time in order to move toward work as well as to fulfill new welfare requirements. The nexus between transportation, school, child care, and work can become a major hurdle.

- ✦ ***The regional transportation task force is an example of a collaborative effort that was able to formulate some innovative solutions to transportation in the Valley.***

Three regional planning agencies met in 1998 to address transportation to work issues. Out of these meetings came a transportation task force that was able to use some new sources of federal funding, primarily welfare to work money, to extend and ratchet up transit services in the Valley. One of the priorities of the task force was to increase access for Valley workers to major business centers in and around the Valley. For example, the task force established a new bus route that runs from the Valley to the Waterbury Mall. It also created a Bridgeport Avenue

Commuter Connection that provides transit services to and from businesses along Bridgeport Avenue in the morning and afternoon. In addition, it brokered with the Regional Growth Connection in New Haven, an on-demand job ride program for Valley welfare recipients.

Racial and Ethnic Groups

Defining the Population

The minority population of the Valley, while small, is highly concentrated in a few communities. In 1998, approximately 3 percent of the Valley's total population was African-American and 3 percent Latino.²² A newer group of Bosnians has settled the area, adding to the Valley's other, more established European immigrant communities from Poland, Italy, and Ireland.

Latinos have experienced the most growth among minority populations in the Valley. Between 1990 and 1997, the Latino population was estimated to have grown by more than 6 percent in Derby and between 2 and 6 percent in parts of Ansonia and Shelton.²³ Derby has the highest percentage of Latino residents in the Valley, followed by Ansonia and Shelton. In some of the Valley's middle and elementary schools there are pockets of double digit concentrations of Latino students, ranging from 13 percent of Shelton's Lafayette School, to 14.7 percent in Derby's Irving School, to 16.5 percent in Ansonia's Peck School. All four towns in the Valley with high schools have a higher proportion of Latino students in their public high schools than the overall proportion of Latinos in their respective towns. (See Table 10.)

Table 10: The Latino Population in the Valley		
	Percent of Total Population, 1998 (%)	Percent of Latino High School Students, 1997- 1998 (%)
Ansonia	3.6	7.1
Beacon Falls	1.4	N/A*
Derby	5.8	8.2
Oxford	2.1	N/A*
Sevmour	1.8	2.3
Shelton	3.2	3.9
Valley	3.2	N/A
Connecticut	8.1	N/A

Source: National Decision Systems Population Estimates and Connecticut Department of Education School Profiles.
*Data is collected by school district; Beacon Falls and Oxford data are not available.

²² Estimates taken from National Decision Systems data prepared for Griffin Hospital.

²³ James Gimpel & Associates, Report on the Naugatuck Valley Corridor by Census Tract, 1990-2007, March 1998.

Ansonia is home to the largest concentration of African-Americans in the Valley. In 1998, there were an estimated 1,789 African-Americans living in Ansonia, 64 percent of the Valley's total African-American community. The town with the next highest concentration is Derby, with 3 percent. (See Table 11.) Ansonia's African-American community has two distinct segments. The segment associated with the Olson Drive area of Ansonia is characterized as lower-income and populated with more recent migrants from Bridgeport and New Haven. A 1998 study of the census tracts in the Naugatuck Valley Corridor reveal that African-American families in the region earned 82 cents for every dollar earned by whites in 1990. The segment living in the North End section of Ansonia has been in the Valley for the better part of the century and consists of more middle-class, home owning families.

	Percent of Total Population, 1998 (%)	Percent of A-A High School Students, 1997-1998 (%)
Ansonia	10.1	13.0
Beacon Falls	1.2	N/A*
Derby	3.0	6.4
Oxford	0.2	N/A*
Seymour	1.0	1.4
Shelton	1.1	1.3
Valley	2.9	N/A
Connecticut	8.9	N/A

Source: National Decision Systems Population Estimates and Connecticut Department of Education School Profiles.
*Data is collected by school district; Beacon Falls and Oxford data are not available.

Major Findings

- ✦ *Unlike Italian, Irish, and Polish immigrants, African-American and Latino residents are not as fully integrated into the fabric of the Valley community.*

The Latino and African-American communities tend to be poorer, live in more segregated housing, and have weaker representation in the political and civic life of the Valley. A number of Latino residents and a significant portion of the African-American community in Ansonia's Olson Drive area are recent transplants to the Valley. Many have moved to the Valley from nearby bigger cities like New Haven, Bridgeport, and Waterbury. Another portion of the Latino population is new to this country altogether. In the 1997-1998 school year, 41 percent of the Valley Regional Adult Education's 378 enrolled students in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program were from Latin American countries.²⁴ And, despite a strong effort

²⁴ Approximately one-half, or 75, of the ESL students from Latin American countries are from Ecuador. Among all

through the Valley United Way and the Valley Council on Health and Human Services' Leadership Education Advocating Diversity (LEAD) program, funded by the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, the minority representation on community boards, commissions, and committees tends to be weak.

- ✦ ***While there are few overt manifestations of racial tensions in the Valley, many believe that there are underlying issues that are affecting development patterns and the community's civic life.***

While representation in civic life among minorities has been an issue addressed within the Valley, there is some concern that there are more racial and ethnic divisions within the Valley than many people address directly. For example, individuals attending the Health Care Advisory focus group -- primarily lower-income minority women -- mentioned that the issue of race was "heating up" more than people in the Valley were willing to admit. Moreover, many businesses and residents refer in negative terms to Ansonia and Derby, noting the concentration of "problems" in those communities.

- ✦ ***The African-American community is relatively well-organized.***

There is a small but well-regarded core of African-American leaders in the Valley. In general, people list four to five leaders that are effective spokespersons, role models, and advocates for the African-American community. These leaders hold prominent positions in some of the Valley's nonprofits and local government. The African-American community also has at least two nonprofit organizations that serve their community. Ansonia Community Action grew out of a community effort more than 30 years ago to organize more home ownership and housing opportunities for African-Americans in the north end community of Ansonia. Today, Ansonia Community Action has broadened its scope to serve other sections of the city and runs after-school, emergency assistance, and advocacy programs in addition to maintaining links with the city's youth services bureau and youth employment programs. The Tinney Community Center is a five-year-old program that is part of the Ansonia Housing Authority and is located in the heart of the Olson Drive neighborhood. The Center offers youth-oriented programs such as a K-12 nutrition program, after-school program, Boy and Girl Scouts, GED preparation for single moms and young men, and a new youth computer center.

- ✦ ***The Latino population has less visibility in the community and less is known about the leadership in the Latino community.***

A glaring gap in the civic infrastructure of the Valley is the lack of Latino leadership. There are few, if any, Latinos in prominent leadership positions in the Valley. Very little is known about their leadership. There are only a few social and human service programs that serve the Latino community. Catholic Family Services offers bilingual and bicultural social work services and a Latino violence program to the Spanish speaking community. TEAM has some new bilingual, bicultural staff. Valley Regional Adult Education offers English as a Second Language classes. At one time, St. Joseph's parish in Shelton had a Spanish speaking

adult programs at Valley Regional Adult Education, Ecuador has the largest number of total students enrolled with 81, Poland is second with 79, and Bosnia is third with 41.

priest who organized the Latino community and acted as a focal point for its activities in the Valley. The parish sponsored a small survey of the Latino community in 1995.²⁵ The organization and study fell by the wayside when the parish priest was transferred out of the Valley a number of years ago. Ansonia also attempted to start up a newsletter that catered to the Latino community, but after only a few months the initiative was aborted because of lack of interest. Apart from these small services and efforts, the Latino community remains relatively unorganized today.

✦ ***There are two easily identifiable barriers to a better organized Latino community -- the barrier of language and the internal tensions between different Latino nationalities.***

One of the most obvious barriers to better services and organization among the Latino community is the difficulty of speaking a different language in a relatively homogenous region. For example, the January 1999 Naugatuck Valley Corridor Economic Development Strategy²⁶ notes that the explosive growth of Latinos in the region poses new challenges for employers who hire Spanish-speaking workers, those who are both skilled and unskilled. TEAM's 1998-1999 Community Needs Assessment lists language as being "a serious barrier" identified by 18.8 percent of its surveyed population. As mentioned earlier, only a few social service programs in the Valley have bilingual persons on their staff to meet the new demand from a growing Latino population. Both service providers and Latino residents mention the lack of Spanish speaking staff as a barrier to receiving services.

A second barrier is the mix of nationalities within the Latino community itself. One leader involved with the production and sponsorship of Ansonia's Spanish language newsletter noted that its failure had as much to do with a lack of interest as it did with trying to meet the different needs of the people from multiple Spanish speaking nationalities. The three largest groups of students enrolled in Valley Regional Adult Education's ESL programs came from Ecuador, Puerto Rico, and Mexico. Each of these countries alone has vastly different dialects, customs, and cultures.

Youth

Defining the Population

According to population estimates generated by National Decision Systems for Griffin Hospital in 1998, the Valley's youth population between the ages of five and 17 is 16,570 children, or 17.3 percent of the Valley's total population. The proportion of youth between the ages of five and 17 for the state as a whole is slightly lower, estimated to be 16.8 percent of the total. Previously reported data in this report notes an influx of new students and increases in enrollments in many of the Valley public school districts.

²⁵ New Horizons Consulting, *The Hispanic Community in the Valley*, sponsored by the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, 1995.

²⁶ DeCarlo & Doll, et. al., *Naugatuck Valley Corridor Economic Development Strategy*, prepared for Naugatuck Valley Development Corporation and Shelton Economic Development Corporation, January 1999.

Leaders in the Valley and participants in Mt. Auburn's interviews and focus groups signal a number of particular concerns for adolescents and teens -- those young people beyond the infant, toddler, and pre-school years. The main concerns center around schools and education, substance abuse, teen activities and after-school programs, and career development and awareness for these young people. Following is a list of the key findings and issues related to the youth population.

Major Findings

- ✦ ***An emphasis toward improving the quality of the schools has emerged in the Valley, and the region has begun to reverse a history of under-funding education with a renewed focus on building new schools and developing better curriculum.***

Before shifts in the economy took place in the mid-1990s, the Valley's heritage and economic well-being were intimately tied to manufacturing and blue collar jobs. Most graduates of the public schools were expected to take jobs in industry and often spent their entire careers in one firm or industry sector. Even though many graduates went on to higher education, the emphasis of the public schools was to prepare students with the skills they needed to succeed in an industrial economy.

Community leaders and educational officials, however, note a shift in emphasis toward focusing on school quality over the last decade. A 1995 market research survey found that improving the school systems in the Valley was one of two items that topped the list of concerns among 300 of the Valley's community leaders.²⁷ Overall, this strong emphasis on quality and improvement has continued today. The most notable example within the past year has been the construction and opening of a new \$27 million high school in Ansonia.

- ✦ ***One reason for renewed emphasis on school quality and improvement in the Valley has come from newcomers who have demanded a greater investment in education.***

The new residents who are coming to the Valley tend to be white collar workers who have high expectations for the educational system. As noted earlier, Oxford and Shelton schools in particular have experienced noticeable growth spurts in enrollment because of an influx of new families from Fairfield County. These new residents tend to believe that schools should have a strong commitment to educational excellence and that towns should be willing to make the appropriate investments. As a consequence, some of these newcomers are putting demands on the schools to raise and channel more money to schools and education.

- ✦ ***Another reason for this overall shift in emphasis has been the emergence of a cadre of leaders in the region's schools.***

From the interviews that were conducted, it is clear that several educators are viewed as creative and innovative leaders. They take risks and try to help others in the system to think out-of-the-box. Many note that this new leadership is a breath of fresh air for the Valley schools. In addition, several schools in the system have distinguished themselves in the region for being

²⁷ Smith & Company, *Healthy Valley 2000: Community Leader Survey*, prepared for Valley United Way, June 1995.

risk-takers and attempting to develop a progressive and innovative curriculum. Taken together, these leaders and schools have begun to turn around the impression that the region has not made education a top priority.

- ✦ ***Community leaders and officials still note two areas of frustration, shared with other communities, about the state of the Valley's schools: first is the inability or unwillingness among some schools to work together regionally; and second is the weak relationship between schools and organizations in the community.***

The Valley's 1999 All-American City application concedes that "historically there has been difficulty in building partnerships and a regional agenda on education." Even though attempts have been made to improve cooperation, such as the 1998 "Community Conversation on Education" and a Seymour middle school mentoring program being developed by the Children's Team subcommittee of the Family Violence Task Force, there are still a number of issues that impede collaboration around the schools.

One is the reluctance of some residents and school officials to put aside their parochial differences and work regionally. A recent effort at working on more of a regional basis occurred when Ansonia and Derby floated the idea of building one new high school that could be used jointly by the towns. Although the reasons behind the decision to forego this effort were complex, many school and public officials noted that the main stumbling blocks were a desire to retain distinct town identities.

A second issue is the divide between schools and the organizations that provide services and programs to school age youth. A number of people within the Valley's social and human service network note the reluctance of some school districts to engage with them on a more institutional level. Efforts have been made to create a more formal partnership with the schools and to maximize the resources that are directed to the Valley's school age youth. However, social and human services organizations find that the schools are often not eager to collaborate.

- ✦ ***Like other communities, there is widespread concern over the lack of teen activities and after school programs serving the Valley's youth.***

A major theme from our interviews and focus groups is the need for more after school programs and activities. It is an issue that is becoming more important as more single mothers and parents from two-parent families are working, leaving young people in child care centers or on their own. Clearly, there are a number of organizations that offer after-school programming and teen activities. Some of the more prominent ones are the Boys and Girls Club, Valley YMCA, Tinney Community Center, and Ansonia Community Action.

Yet, one out of every five people that Mt. Auburn interviewed for this project, and participants in four of the 13 focus groups that were held, still found the lack of after-school activities as a particular gap in the Valley.²⁸ To be more specific, The Children's Team, a coalition of children and youth agencies in the Valley, identified non-recreational after school

²⁸ Interviewees mentioning after-school activities as a gap include Valley YMCA, Tinney Community Center, TEAM, Valley Regional Adult Education, Birmingham Group, Ansonia Community Action, Boys and Girls Club, Shelton Schools, Ansonia Schools, and Emmitt O'Brien Technical School.

programming as the major problem for Valley youth. Other interviewees mentioned that while there seems to be a plethora of programs for children in Shelton, other communities suffer from a deficiency in programs and middle school students in general seem to be the most underserved population.

✦ ***There is little coordination among agencies serving children and youth in the Valley.***

People note different reasons for a lack of cooperation and coordination among the Valley's youth service agencies. One reason is that there are limited resources for building more coordination into existing programs. For example, managed care reimbursement is the primary funding mechanism for the delivery of child counseling services. The restrictions on reimbursable services are becoming tighter and, therefore, services previously provided by agencies are becoming less available and are meeting less of the needs of the Valley. Recently, staff from different youth agencies, who were at a Children's Team subcommittee meeting, talked openly about the competition for scarce dollars. They noted how this competition has forced agencies to hold back from more coordination and collaboration. Also, a former employee of a town's youth bureau stated during an interview that he saw "a lot of turf issues and duplication of services" that made it difficult for youth-oriented agencies to coalesce. And, finally, another agency staff person indicated that his organization is starting a \$200,000 in-school prevention program and no one in the local school department has knowledge of the initiative.

However, even though there is no current inventory or shared knowledge of who is doing what in the field of children and youth services, there are signs that coordination may yet emerge. The Children's Team subcommittee of the Family Violence Task Force is one initiative with the potential to begin to bridge the gap. Roughly six to ten agencies typically send representatives to the meetings. The group has been meeting for almost a year and is still defining its mission, but is looking very seriously at the issue of coordination. Also, the Parent Child Resource Center receives a small grant as part of the state's Child Adolescent Service System's "wrap around" program. The \$20,000 grant goes to a local agency to coordinate services for young people affiliated with the state's Department of Children and Family (DCF).

✦ ***Although substance abuse among youth is often high on people's list of community problems, the Valley has generally done better relative to communities outside the Valley.***

Alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana use have been identified by the Valley Substance Abuse Action Council, the primary public education and prevention program for youth in the Valley, as the top priorities areas in substance abuse. Interviews with community leaders and other residents point to substance abuse problems generally surfacing during the weekends, principally after sports events.

Although abuse is a concern, a bi-annual survey of high school students commissioned by the Valley Substance Abuse Action Council (VSAAC) showed that progress has been made in addressing the problem. A February 1999 press release regarding the survey notes that "substance abuse rates for youth in Connecticut's Lower Naugatuck Valley have fallen to the

lowest levels since measurement started in 1992, despite national increases in the same categories."²⁹

Also, the use of hard drugs, while still an important issue, is less problematic among Valley youth, relative to national statistics. The February 1999 press release states, "Valley usage rates of cocaine, inhalants, and other illicit drugs also dropped since 1994 when rates were relatively low anyway."

✦ ***Despite a decline in substance abuse among Valley youth, there is very little in terms of treatment programs.***

The Valley Substance Abuse Action Council is the major convener, educator, and advocator on youth substance abuse in the Valley. It is one of the state's 14 Regional Action Councils. VSAAC partners with Parent Teacher Associations, the DARE programs, police, and the schools to develop outreach and prevention programs, in addition to conducting its bi-annual survey of 7th, 9th, and 11th grade students in the Valley. While these services and activities are very important, there is still a glaring absence of treatment programs directed at young people. The small infrastructure of Valley substance abuse treatment and support groups that do exist are targeted primarily at adults.

✦ ***Integration into the community is a problem for many teenagers. Some feel a profound sense of isolation from the larger community.***

Teenage alienation is not a new phenomenon nor is it unique to the Valley. However, it is an issue that warrants attention. High school students who participated in a focus group in October were very clear and direct about the alienation they feel from the larger, adult community in the Valley. They feel disconnected from the world of politics, work, and community service. And, they have no central facility like a teen center where they could create an environment and a set of programs and activities that respond to their needs and interests.

One manifestation of this sense of isolation may be the increase in young students who drop out of traditional high schools and instead opt for alternative high schools. The Valley Regional Adult Education's alternative high school has seen a tremendous growth in enrollment from Valley youth over the past few years. Some of the reasons a student would typically choose an alternative high school program include teen pregnancy, discipline problems, abuse issues, and an aversion to the more traditional courses and methods of teaching.

✦ ***Low-income teenagers feel that they get little career or workforce guidance from schools or guidance counselors.***

Two focus groups of high school-age students revealed that they have limited knowledge of the kind of jobs and careers available to them in the Valley. Many in the focus groups spoke of leaving the Valley because the local economy lacked opportunity or options for a good career. One guidance counselor noted that the disconnect lies between the fact that the economic

²⁹ Valley Substance Abuse Action Council, "Valley Youth Drug Rates Drop to Lowest Levels in Seven Years," Press Release, February 9, 1999.

structure in the local economy has changed and there is limited understanding among parents and students of the nature and extent of these economic changes.

Also, guidance counselors tend to spend much of their time and resources helping college-bound students find the right college or university. Students who are not going on to higher education do receive attention from guidance counselors, but the direction they are given is not always rooted in a strong understanding of the local labor market

Senior Citizens

Defining the Population

A 1993 report first dispelled the myth that the Valley has a greater proportion of senior citizens than other areas. This report showed that, according to 1990 Census data, the Valley's distribution of senior citizens matches the distribution for Connecticut's senior population as a whole.³⁰ More recent estimates prepared by National Decision Systems indicate that this corresponding distribution still holds true in 1998: Valley residents ages 60 plus make up 18.1 percent of the total population, while Connecticut residents ages 60 plus make up 18.3 percent of the statewide total.³¹ Much like the rest of the country, this proportion is expected to grow. The following is a list of the key findings and issues related to the Valley's seniors.

Major Findings

- ✦ ***There is a good infrastructure of senior centers with sufficient resources to meet demand. The major limitation in senior center services is lack of coordination.***

The Valley is fortunate to have active and well-utilized senior centers in each of the Valley towns. Shelton's senior center is the biggest and best resourced, welcoming more than 1,000 seniors to the center each week. Ansonia and Derby have the next largest centers with 500 to 600 visitors each week. Each of the senior centers offer a variety of social, recreational, and educational activities ranging from arts and crafts, to health screenings, to dances, to inter-generational activities.

Even though the reality is that seniors cross town lines to utilize the centers (some report going to events and activities at different centers each day of the week), there is little, if any, interaction among senior centers. Each center plans programming and major capital investments without knowledge of or coordination with the other centers. There is no forum or institutional infrastructure that brings senior centers together to discuss Valley-wide senior issues or to coordinate senior center service delivery and tracking of special needs. The Elder Response Team focuses more on coordination of services for individual seniors rather than on institutionally linking the different senior centers.

³⁰ William Powanda, Economic and Demographic Profile of the Valley Community, issued by Griffin Health Services Corporation in cooperation with the Greater Valley Chamber of Commerce, May 1993.

³¹ Valley residents ages 50 plus make up 29.7 percent of the total, while CT residents ages 50 plus make up 29.5 percent of the total. National Decision Systems population estimates (1990-1998) prepared for Griffin Hospital, September 1998.

✦ ***There is a significant population of senior "shut-ins" who are not being reached through current programs.***

Participants in Mt. Auburn's senior focus groups note that severe loneliness and healthcare issues affect a portion of the senior citizen population confined to their homes. The 1999-2000 TEAM Community Action Plan notes that "a significant portion of [the] elderly are attempting to remain in their homes with little or no family support into their late 80s and 90s."³² Focus group participants suggested there were perhaps hundreds of "shut-ins" scattered throughout the Valley.

There are two programs that attempt to meet some of this need and connect senior shut-ins to the service delivery systems in the Valley. TEAM's ElderCare Outreach and Support offers case management and home visits to the Valley's senior citizens. In one year, the ElderCare team made 200 home visits. The Elder Response Team also sponsors a Warm-Line where volunteers are trained to field calls from seniors who need advice or simply someone to talk to. The Warm-Line is available weeknights from 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm and may expand to include weekends. Despite the services offered by these two programs, focus group participants and leaders in the senior community note that a significant portion of shut-ins in the Valley are not being reached. Resources for hiring outreach workers are limited and, as a consequence, identifying and reaching out to seniors who are confined to their homes is problematic.

✦ ***There is significant shortage of senior housing in the Valley.***

A 1994 accounting of senior housing shows there were 530 units of elderly subsidized housing units in the Valley. In 1998, there were 598 units, an increase of 68 units overall.³³ Most of this housing is occupied by low-income seniors and seniors living on Medicare or Medicaid. Leaders in the field of elder services note that demand for senior housing outstrips supply. For example, Ansonia Housing Authority notes that it has long waiting lists for its elderly housing. Another indication is that Seymour has only 120 subsidized units to serve the proportion of its estimated 2,555 senior population (over 60 years of age) who are in need.

✦ ***Transportation for seniors is relatively strong in the Valley.***

The major issues for senior transportation mirror the issues of the general population -- off-hour and weekend service is limited. Besides these issues and despite some concerns raised by seniors in terms of the inconvenience of public transportation, Valley seniors are relatively well served by existing services. Overall, 85 percent of the Valley's on-demand transit service is dedicated to the needs of senior citizens and disabled residents.³⁴ TEAM contracts with Valley Transit to provide door-to-door service for certain social and medical activities among low-income seniors. Otherwise, Valley Transit's fixed route service provides seniors with most of their transportation to and from the senior centers. Routes have been adjusted to make sure the centers are frequented by buses and mini vans.

³² Training, Education and Manpower, Inc., *Team Community Action Plan 1999-2000*, June 1999.

³³ CT Department of Social Services, Elderly Services Division, *Rental Housing for the Elderly*, December 1998. Not included in these numbers is The Ripton, a 36 unit elderly housing project in the midst of development in downtown Shelton.

³⁴ Training, Education and Manpower, Inc., *Team Community Action Plan 1999-2000*, June 1999.

