High Poverty *Hotspots*[1] – Polk County

High poverty *hotspots* are geographic concentrations of poor residents. This report identifies high poverty hotspots in Polk County and provides a profile of residents using Census Bureau, DHS, and Oregon Employment Department (OED) data. DHS administrative data on SNAP clients were pulled for all clients known to be living in the hotspots in January 2015. SNAP information was used because SNAP is the single largest DHS/OHA program, it has a high participation rate among Oregon's poor and low income residents, and it has reliable geographic information. Statewide, about 96 percent of SNAP clients have addresses that can be reliably located within a census tract.

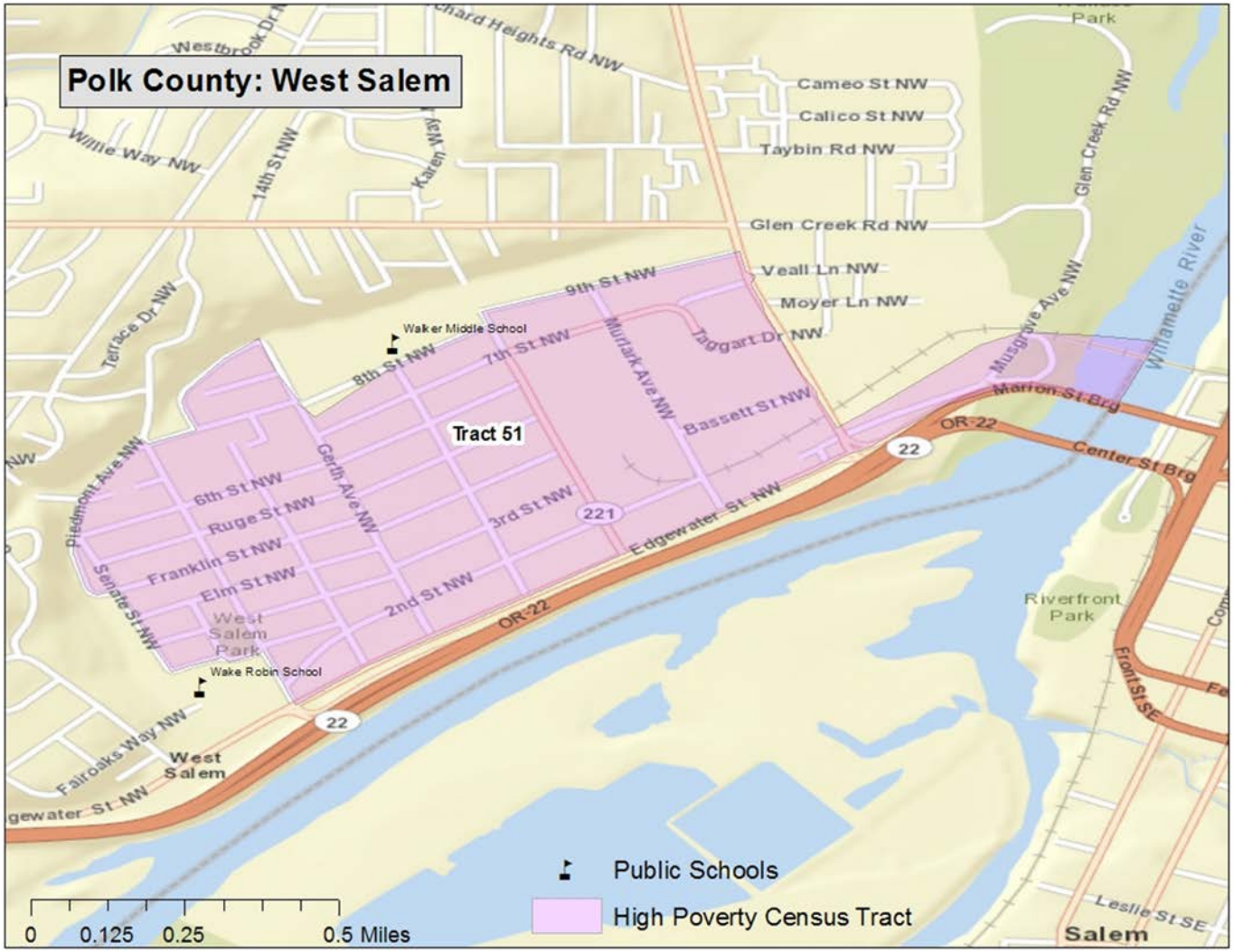
Once data on SNAP clients within the hotspots were pulled, information about them was assembled from the DHS Integrated Client Services (ICS) data warehouse. ICS contains information on clients from nearly all DHS/OHA programs from January 2000 to present. In addition, Oregon employment and earnings history for all clients has been provided by OED and incorporated into ICS.

The purpose of this report is to identify high poverty areas and describe residents and SNAP clients living in them. Characteristics of the hotspot are compared with the county and Oregon. Data are presented in a series of tables that follow. Bullet points are provided when there is pertinent information not included in the tables. Data in this report should be considered a means to illustrate the lives of hotspot residents with respect to family structure, geographic mobility, employment history, and to identify potential barriers to self-sufficiency. Knowledge about local high poverty hotspots can be useful when designing and locating programs and services targeted to low income people. Poverty concentrations also pose a number of challenges for local public schools.

Polk County has two high poverty hotspots. According to Census Bureau and DHS data, 15 percent of Polk County's population, 27 percent of its poor, and 25 percent of its SNAP clients live in the areas described below.

[1] **Hotspot**: The Census Bureau's definition of a *poverty area* is a tract with a poverty rate of 20 percent or more. We define a high poverty hotspot as a census tract or contiguous group of tracts with poverty rates of 20 percent or more for two consecutive measurements. Poverty rates were measured in the Census Bureau's 2009-2013 and 2008-2012 American Community Surveys (ACS). Tracts must also have fewer than 20 percent of residents living in group quarters and fewer than 20 percent of adult residents who are higher education students. Tract 203.04 surrounding Western Oregon University was omitted from this analysis due to the high population of university students. Tract 202.03 in Dallas was omitted because it was high poverty in the 2009-13 ACS but not the 2008-12 ACS.

Figure 1: Poverty hotspot: West Salem

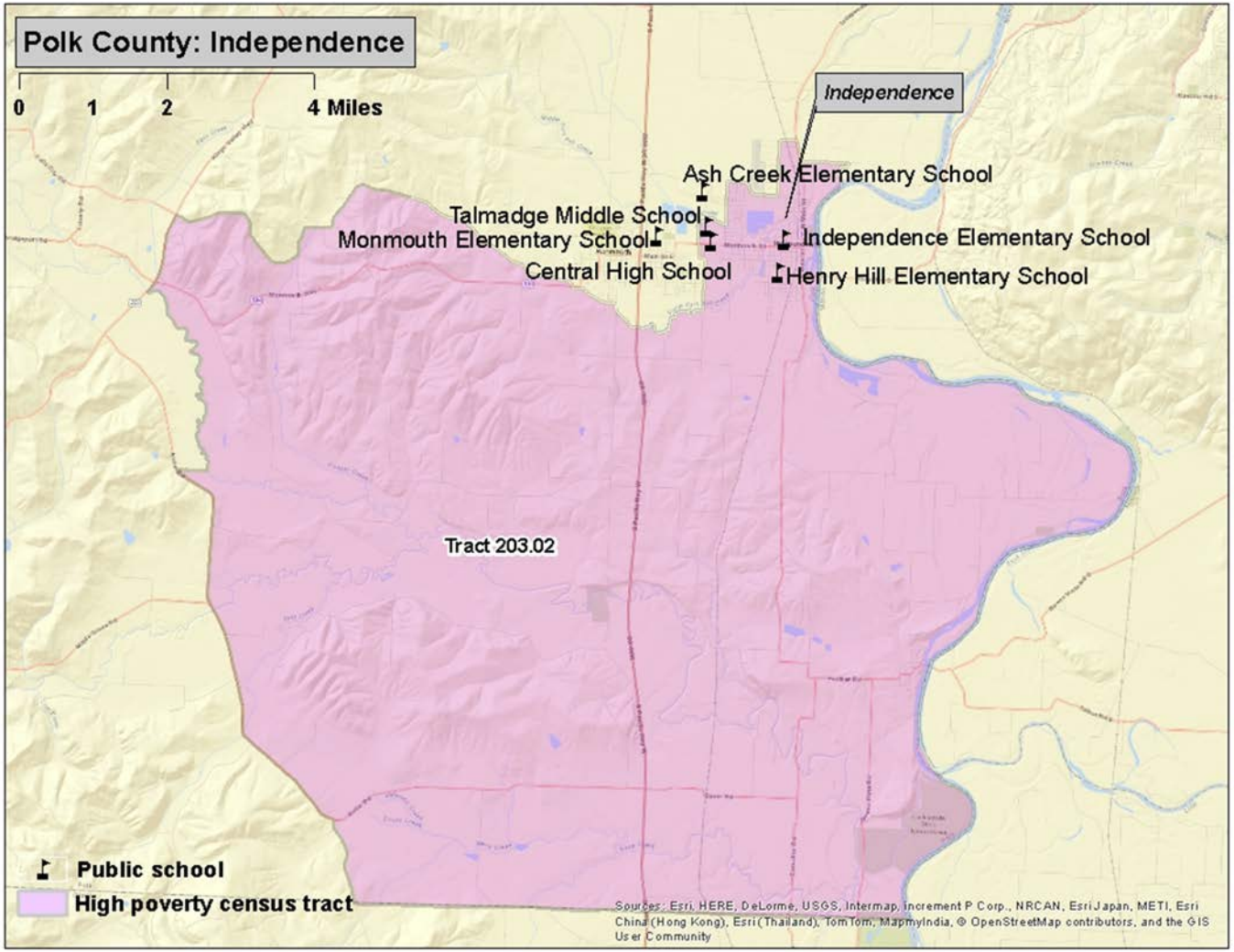


- *West Salem* (*Census* tract 51, Figure 1)

Location: Most of the portion of West Salem that lies below the Eola Hills

Boundaries:
North: Arthur Way NW, and 8th and 9th streets NW
South: Edgewater Road NW
East: Wallace Road NW
West: Rosemont Avenue NW, Senate Street NW, and Piedmont Avenue NW

Figure 2: Poverty hotspot: Independence



- *Independence* (Census tract 203.02, Figure 2)

Location: Most of the city of Independence and extending south into rural Polk County.

Boundaries:
North: Ferris Corner, McCaleb, and Mistletoe roads, the North and South forks of Ash Creek, Hoffman, Gun Club and Hanna roads
South: Benton County line
East: The Willamette River
West: Kings Valley Highway (Oregon 223), the Little Luckiamute River, and Airlie and Berry Creek roads

Census measures compared to the county and state (Table 1)

Table 1 Polk County hotspots: neighborhood characteristics from the Census Bureau[1]

	Hotspots			
	West Salem	**Independence**	**Polk County**	**Oregon**
ACS Poverty rate	39%	26%	16%	16%
ACS 2009-13 population estimate	2,058	9,541	75,930	3,868,719
Housing units	1,009	3,315	30,283	1,677,363
Percent renter occupied	54%	28%	32%	34%
Total Households	893	3,160	28,239	1,516,456
Percent single-mother with minor children	13%	11%	10%	11%
Percent married parents with minor children	38%	61%	55%	49%
Average Body Mass Index 2012 (Adults)[2]	28.2	27.9	27.1	26.5
Percent of population that is				
Female	57%	48%	52%	51%
Under 18	26%	29%	24%	22%
18 to 24	10%	14%	12%	9%
25 to 44	31%	24%	23%	27%
45 to 59	15%	19%	19%	21%
60+ years of age	18%	14%	22%	21%
Latino	27%	35%	12%	12%
White and non-Latino	61%	59%	80%	78%
Non-white and non-Latino	12%	6%	7%	10%
English proficient (age 5 and older)	78%	87%	95%	94%
With less than a high school education (age 25 and older)	35%	19%	10%	11%
With at least a bachelors degree	15%	21%	29%	30%

1. All data are from Census Bureau unless otherwise noted. ACS=American Community Survey

2. Courtesy of Oregon Public Health Division; for more information on Body Mass Index: http://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyEnvironments/TrackingAssessment/EnvironmentalPublicHealthTracking/Documents/Reports/EPHT_DMV_obesity_tracking.pdf

- Among all Oregon hotspots, West Salem had the 6th highest poverty rate and the 6th highest percentage of adults without high school completion or a GED.

Characteristics of SNAP hotspot clients compared to county and state (Table 2)

Table 2 Polk County hotspots: characteristics of SNAP clients

	Hotspots			
	West Salem	**Independence**	**Polk County**	**Oregon**
Total SNAP clients January 2015[1]	877	2,801	14,975	763,700
Change since January 2010	23%	16%	18%	15%
Average months of SNAP receipt (total since January 2000)	75	75	73	70
Jan 2015 per capita SNAP clients[2]	43%	29%	20%	20%
Female	53%	52%	54%	53%
Children	41%	50%	40%	36%
18 to 24	7%	10%	12%	10%
25 to 44	28%	24%	27%	27%
45 to 59	17%	9%	13%	16%
60 +	8%	7%	9%	11%
English as preferred language	83%	77%	90%	88%
Household characteristics				
Clients in childless households	34%	25%	35%	41%
Clients in single parent households	36%	37%	33%	31%
Clients in multi parent households	27%	32%	29%	26%
Concurrent DHS/OHA services[3]				
TANF	17%	15%	14%	11%
Medical assistance	84%	83%	81%	82%
ERDC (percent of children)	6%	5%	7%	8%
DHS/OHA service history[4]				
Domestic violence	10%	13%	12%	11%
Mental health	2%	1%	2%	4%
Alcohol and drug	21%	15%	19%	20%
Child welfare	18%	19%	17%	16%
Developmental disability	1%	1%	2%	2%
Vocational rehabilitation	8%	4%	6%	5%
Hotspot Index Rank[5]	23	56	-	-

1. **Clients are limited to those with addresses that could be placed reliably within a census tract.**
2. **Proportion of January 2015 caseload to ACS 2009-13 population.**
3. **SNAP clients who were also receiving listed services in January 2015.**
4. **Clients with *any* record in these service areas. For child welfare, assessments, in-home services, and foster care are counted.**
5. **The *hotspot index* is a consolidated ranking of each of the 112 hotspots. The smaller the number, the more stressed the area. Ranking factors are poverty rate, percent of single-mother households, adults without a high school diploma, DHS/OHA program use, and rate of geographic mobility.**

- Among all Oregon hotspots, West Salem had the 12th highest rate of concurrent TANF receipt. This measure, along with the area's low educational attainment and high poverty rate earned the hotspot index rank of 23.

- Among all Oregon hotspots, Independence ranked 22nd highest in terms of non-english language preference by clients; nearly one-quarter preferred a language other than English with the majority of those preferring Spanish.

Employment characteristics of adult SNAP hotspot clients compared to county and state (Table 3)

Table 3 Polk County hotspots: employment history for adult SNAP clients[1]

	Hotspots			
	West Salem	**Independence**	**Polk County**	**Oregon**
Oregon employment history for adults				
Percent of adult clients with work history in 2009	40%	42%	38%	36%
Percent of adult clients with work history in 2014	39%	46%	41%	38%
Average hourly earnings 2009 (in 2014 dollars)	$ 13.45	$ 13.96	$ 14.32	$ 14.33
Average hourly earnings 2014	$ 12.21	$ 13.14	$ 12.96	$ 12.95
Average annual earnings 2009 (in 2014 dollars)	$ 13,935	$ 15,192	$ 14,694	$ 14,347
Average annual earnings 2014	$ 11,711	$ 14,157	$ 12,523	$ 12,294
Percent change in annual earnings 2014 v. 2009	-16%	-7%	-15%	-14%
Percent employed in trade 2009	17%	18%	20%	21%
in 2014	19%	18%	18%	20%
Percent employed in accommodation/food 2009	14%	12%	16%	18%
in 2014	14%	11%	14%	18%
Percent employed in health care/soc. assist. 2009	21%	19%	19%	15%
in 2014	16%	21%	21%	16%
Percent employed in admin services 2009	11%	7%	8%	10%
in 2014	10%	9%	9%	13%
Percent employed in manufacturing 2009	15%	13%	10%	8%
in 2014	8%	10%	9%	7%
Percent employed in construction 2009	3%	3%	4%	4%
in 2014	5%	4%	4%	4%
Percent employed in all other 2009	20%	27%	25%	24%
in 2014	28%	27%	24%	22%

1. **Based on data on hours and earnings covered by unemployment insurance. Table shows the work history for clients residing in the area as of January 2015 regardless of where in Oregon they resided in 2014 or 2009. Agricultural labor, casual labor, work outside of Oregon, and self-employment are not included.**

- Most of the job gains for *all other* among West Salem clients were in the agricultural and forestry services sectors. Overall employment in the area did not change as gains in *all other* were offset by losses in other sectors.

- Employment increases for Independence clients were in the sectors of health care/social assistance, administrative services, and construction.

Geographic mobility (Table 4)

Measuring the number of moves registered by SNAP households is important because low income families often move as a response to job loss, a change in household composition, or eviction. Children who move frequently are more likely to experience academic and social challenges in school.[2] The overwhelming majority of moves among SNAP clients are short-distance, but patterns vary in rural versus urban areas. Census tracts are larger in rural areas and distances are longer between urban areas in largely rural counties. Clients in rural areas are more likely to move within the same census tract or move to a different county than are clients in urban areas. Due to the smaller size of urban census tracts, clients in urban areas are more likely to move to a different tract within the same county than are rural clients.

Table 4 Polk County hotspots: address history for SNAP clients[1,2]

	Hotspots			
	West Salem	**Independence**	**Polk County**	**Oregon**
Total number of clients	877	2,801	14,975	763,700
Average number of residences (including present) since 2010	3.2	2.7	2.9	2.8
Percent of clients with at least one documented move "***Movers*** "	65%	59%	62%	60%
Percent of children with at least one documented move	62%	59%	65%	62%
Most recent move occurred:				
In 2014	36%	30%	33%	32%
In 2013	16%	15%	15%	14%
In 2010, 2011, or 2012	13%	13%	13%	14%
Percent most recently moved from a different census tract	15%	17%	22%	38%
Percent most recently moved from a different county	41%	19%	28%	12%

1. **Clients are limited to those with addresses that could be placed reliably within a census tract. Homeless clients and others without a permanent street address are omitted. Client must have moved at least to a different census block to be counted as a mover.**

2. **SNAP data do not provide a complete address history for clients because addresses are only known while clients are receiving SNAP and if the address change is reported.**

- Migration in the West Salem hotspot fit the urban pattern with one exception: nearly half of movers relocated from the larger portion of Salem which lies across the Willamette River in Marion County. Hence the large number of inter-county moves. One-quarter relocated from another Salem high poverty hotspot.

- Migration in the Independence hotspot fit the rural pattern. Forty percent of Independence movers relocated from another area within the hotspot, 13 percent came from the adjacent city of Monmouth, and 17 percent relocated from adjacent Marion County. Eleven percent relocated from another Oregon hotspot.

[2] The negative effects on low income children associated with frequent moves and school changes are well documented in peer-reviewed literature.