

Quality of Life Indicator Briefing

June 2011

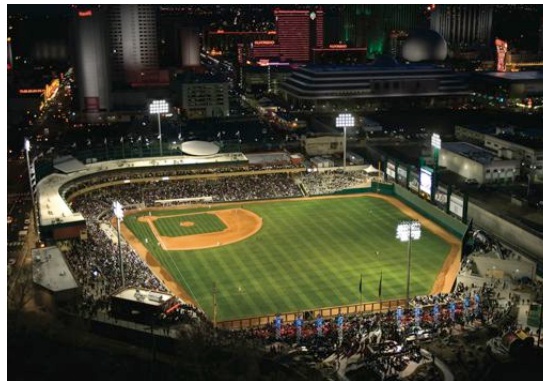


Legislative impacts on quality of life and innovation needed to transform the community

The concern

When housing and construction boomed in Nevada, wages and prices also rose. During that time period, even government entities borrowed more than they could really afford should the economy sour. Now governments need to lower wages in their attempt to pay off unemployment and other debt. And they don't really have alternative choices without new sources of revenue.

Nevada's prolonged high unemployment, out-migration and labor concessions have collectively served to reduce average wages. Unemployment has dropped but not due to job growth. As prices continue to climb, residents have less and less discretionary spending, which in turn, depresses the local economy even further.



If you recently retired and moved to Nevada, your retirement monies likely arrive from out-of-state or from the federal government, and you have access to the same services as working Nevadans.

If you're a first-time homebuyer able to secure financing, you will be able to purchase a more affordable home today than several years ago.

However, if you're a business fiscally wed to the depressed regional economy, you may still be cutting expenses to meet your ongoing obligations. If you're a public agency, you've likely been forced to cut quality of life-related services because businesses haven't flocked to low-tax Nevada, spurring new revenues and there's less revenue every month.

It's time for Nevada to innovative, develop valuable exports, and stop relying on visitors who don't diversify the state's tax base. **The immediate concern**—how will local governments continue to provide a social safety net and deliver services that improve the region, while continuing to cut expenditures and absorbing more unfunded state programs. **The longer-term concern**—how do we effectively work together as a community to innovate the way we govern and deliver services, care for others, learn and work in order to become economically competitive, while facilitating job growth and higher paying jobs, in order to improve quality of life for all the residents in the Truckee Meadows and northern Nevada.

Quality of Life Indicators

Visit Truckee Meadows Tomorrow's Web site for comprehensive data measures on all 33 of the community's indicators: <http://www.truckeemeadowstomorrow.org>

Legislative impacts cross almost every quality of life indicator. The education & lifelong learning indicators will be the focus of the September 2011 indicator briefing. Visit TMT's Web site for other [indicator data](#) and 2010 census data updates this summer, plus the [March 2011 health-related indicators briefing](#).



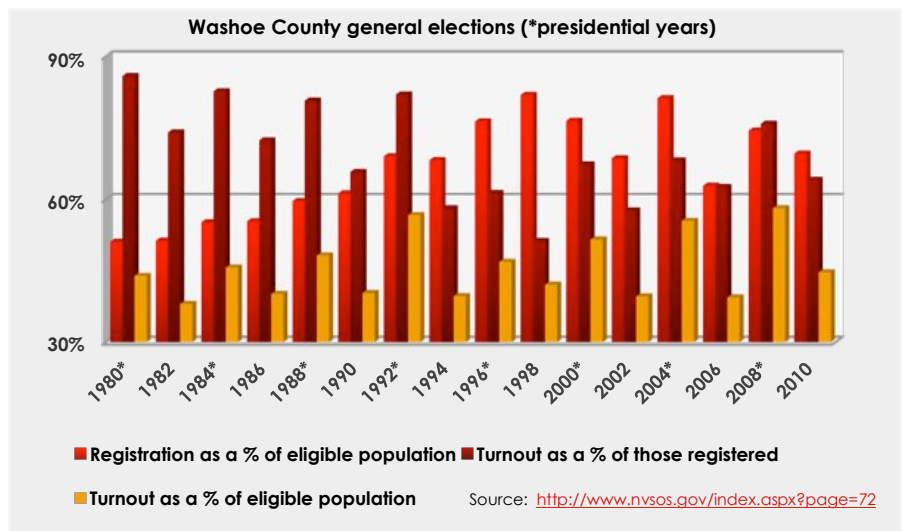
3. Voter turnout

Trend	Washoe County measure	Data
↘	voter registration as a % of eligible population (11/2/10 general election)	69.68%
↘	voter turnout as a % of registered voters (11/2/10)	64.12%
↘	voter turnout as a % of eligible population (11/2/10)	44.68%

Voting is considered fundamental in a democracy and a good overall indicator of quality of life. Elected officials represent the voters, but even though it's your civic duty, most people don't vote.

The percentage of the eligible population that registered and voted in the November 2, 2010 statewide general election was almost 65% across Nevada. Yet, Washoe County voters represented less than 45% of those eligible to vote.

Voter registration has risen in Washoe County, but turnout as a percentage of registered voters declined overtime. Turnout as a percentage of eligible population, has changed little over the last two-decades, other than increasing in presidential years. Only 23% of the eligible Washoe County population went to the polls in the June 2010 primary election. It doesn't take a large number of votes to make it through a primary election, especially at the local level.



4. Civic engagement

Effectively participating in the government process is also essential to democracy.

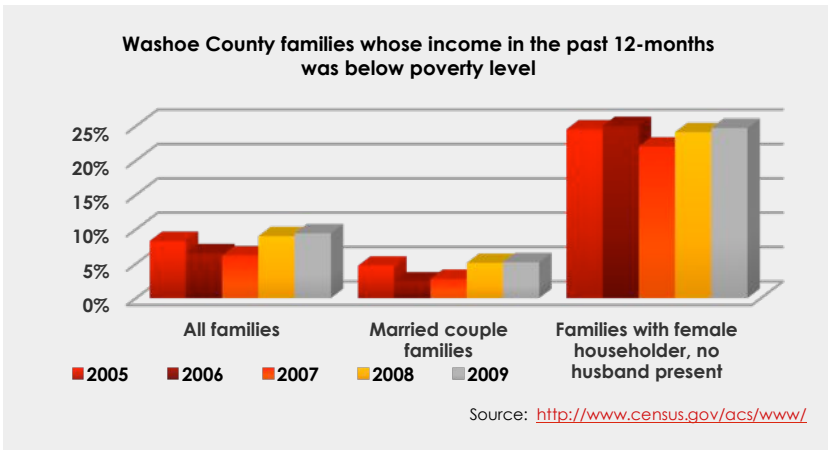
According to, [Civic Life in America: Key Findings on the Civic Health of the Nation](#) (Corporation for National & Community Service, 2010), Nevada's voting rate in the 2008 Presidential election ranked 46th in the nation. The pooled data from 2007-2009 reveal that 5.4% of Nevadans contacted public officials to express opinions, compared to 10.4% nationally; and 8.3% of Nevadans attend public meetings, compared to 9.3% nationally. On a positive note, 8.0% of citizens in the Reno MSA volunteer with a civic-related organization, 7.9% from Las Vegas, 7.4% from Nevada, while only 5.4% nationally. Nationally, those with a higher level of education are more likely to vote, work with neighbors to fix a community problem, exchange favors with neighbors, and generally participate in civic activities.

Trend	Washoe County measure	Data
↘	citizen involvement with local government	See table
2007-2009	citizen engagement (Nevadans working with neighbors to fix a problems)	6%

Citizen involvement with local government (local entity percentage of population)							
	Fiscal year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
City of Reno (2006 Services Survey; Citizen Survey, December 2010)							
Attended a meeting—	City Council		12%				8%
	Neighborhood Advisory Board		11%				5%
	Town Hall						5%
	Board/Commission						4%
Watch RenoTV-13/TV-213			31%				34%
Accessed Web site			49%				45%
Participate in City volunteer opportunities							10%
City of Sparks (Citizen Participation Surveys)							
Attended a government meeting		26%	20%	24%	29%	18%	15%
Watched a public meeting on TV		58%	46%	62%	55%	44%	42%
Use Internet to conduct business with Sparks			29%	30%	39%	28%	26%
Volunteer time to a group or activity in Sparks		38%	35%	42%	39%	32%	35%
Washoe County (FY Budget Books; Citizen Survey, December 2010)							
Viewers who watch WCTV-17/TV-217			50%	48%	50%	41%	36%
Used Web site in last 2-years to conduct business						42%	53%

The Cost of Living (COL) Index compares such costs as housing, transportation, utilities, groceries and healthcare for the typical middle-class family. After years of increases, every COL component for the Reno MSA decreased in 2010; and for the first time in decades, the Q1-2011 composite dropped below the national average to 96.1, due primarily to the large decrease in the housing component.

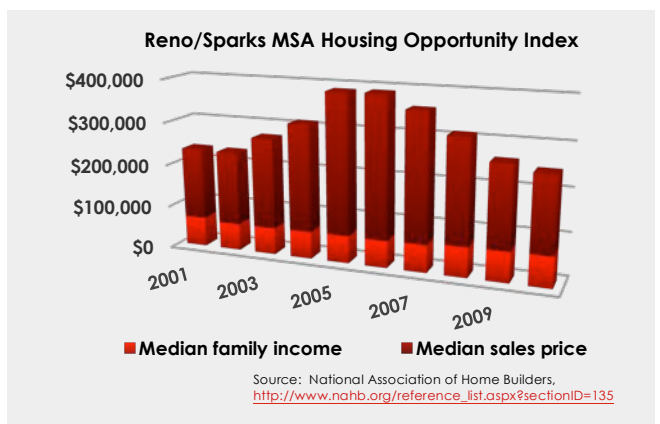
7. Individual & family economic wellbeing



Lower COL helps economic development bring jobs to the region. Throughout the last decade, affordable housing was an issue for residents, as well as businesses considering relocation. According to the National Association of Home Builders, Housing Opportunity Index, 73.2% of homes sold in the area are considered affordable to a family earning the local median income today.

As costs for food and transportation continue to increase, those in lower paying jobs will have less-and-less discretionary income to infuse in the local economy. And several years of declining property values, in conjunction with property tax caps, create month-after-month of revenue deficits for local governments. It's a tenuous balancing act for local governments to continue delivering services that may improve our quality of life, but aren't legally mandated to deliver.

Trend	Washoe County measure	Data
↕	<u>Cost of Living Index</u> (Q1-2011 Reno MSA composite/ Las Vegas)	96.1 101.4
↘	<u>median family income</u> (2009)	\$61,861
↗	<u>families whose income in the past 12-months was below poverty level</u> (2009-all families)	9.4%
↕	<u>Housing Opportunity Index</u> (Q1-2011 Reno MSA)	73.2
↘	<u>households paying > 30% for housing & utilities</u> (2009)	45%
↗	<u>renters paying > 30% for housing & utilities</u> (2009)	55%
↘	<u>mean rental rates per month</u> (2010, 2-bedrooms in the greater Reno/Sparks area)	\$801.44

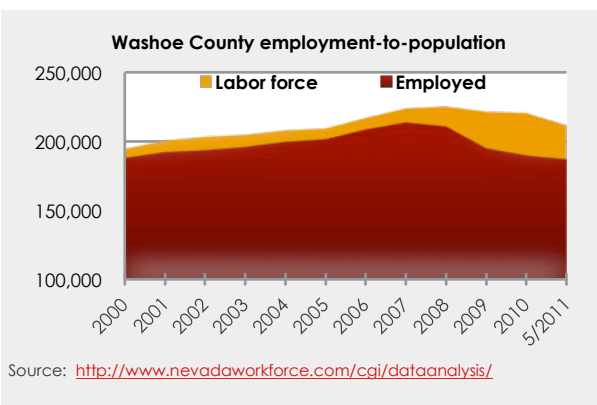


8. Economic vitality

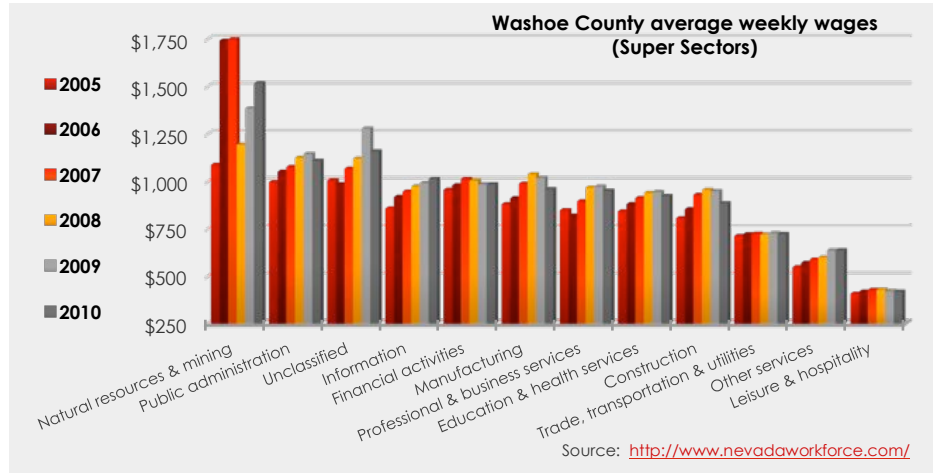
Trend	Washoe County measure	Data
↘	unemployment rate (May 2011)	11.8%
↗	employment-to-population ratio (May 2011)	0.88
↘	employment by industry (top 2010—trade, transportation & utilities/ leisure & hospitality/ government)	40,500 33,540 27,130
↘	average weekly wage by industry (2010, same as above 3-industries)	\$723 \$419 \$1,109
↘	average weekly wage (all industries 2010)	\$797.67
↓	building permits (2010 permits/ million \$ valuation)	1,259 \$70,708
↓	tax revenues (2010 annual change)	-9.6%

Unemployment figures show how many people are having difficulty getting jobs, or who are no longer looking for work or underemployed. Unemployment tripled from 2007-2010 and through May 2011, Nevada continues to have the highest unemployment rate in the nation at 12.1%.

Over 34,000 jobs were lost in Washoe County since 2007, while the labor force declined less than 12,000, an indication of those who have left the labor market. From 2007 through 2010, only the education and health services industry grew (6%); much lower paying food service and dining places jobs grew 2% through the last quarter, but ended up declining by 8% for the same time period.



Job growth in higher wage sectors is needed to spur the economy, especially important as the proportion of retirees increases. After 20-years of wage growth, aggregated for all industries, Washoe County's average weekly wage decreased 1.8% in 2010, while the Consumer Price Index rose 1.6%. It's important to consider wage rates as the economy continues to diversify, because higher wages make the region more affordable for citizens to be self-sufficient, and support revenues for public services.



The 2010 annual [Kosmont-Rose Institute Cost of Doing Business Survey](#) ranked Reno as the 9th least expensive city for business taxes, while the [Tax Foundation](#) ranked Nevada as the 4th best tax climate. Low taxes and tax credits are not incentive enough for businesses to move to Nevada. Disincentives include available workforce, intellectual capital and R&D, too narrow a tax base, and misperceptions about our quality of life. On the other hand, low taxes are an incentive for even more retirees, who are not necessarily invested in the region's future.

10. Entrepreneurship

Trend	Washoe County measure	Data
↗	patents issued (2010 UNR & DRI/ Nevada)	12 540
↗	university R&D expenditures (2008 UNR \$/ rank out of 250)	\$102,073 129 th
↑	Kaufman Index of Entrepreneurial Activity (2010 Nevada entrepreneurs per 100,000 adults)	510

Venture funding and other sources of capital point to a supporting environment to foster start-up companies and enhance economic diversity in the region. Unfortunately, there is little data available to measure regional entrepreneurial activities. Patent activity fluctuates over time, but since 2005, there has been a dramatic increase in the commercialization of R&D, with increased numbers of UNR and DRI invention disclosures, applications and patents issues.

Renewable energy sources, as well as their cost, directly impact the cost of doing business and thereby economic development efforts to diversify northern Nevada, not to mention the sustainability of our natural environment for future generations.

Trend	Washoe County measure	Data
↗	renewable energy sources (Sierra Pacific Power/dba NV Energy, December 2010 geothermal portion of average fuel mix)	10.3%
↗	alternate fueled vehicles (Nevada 2008 total)	11,029

22. Technology infrastructure & engagement

Trend	Washoe County measure	Data
New	Innovation Index (2010)	See table
↗	technology engagement (2009 Nevada households with internet access/ Broadband)	75% 63.9%
2005-2009	"Next Economy" orientation (Reno-Sparks MSA civilians employed in science & engineering/ ages 25-64 with post-secondary degree)	22.5% 19.0%

21. Renewable energy

For more information, please download TMT's [December 2010, Indicator Briefing Report: The Greening of our Economy](#).

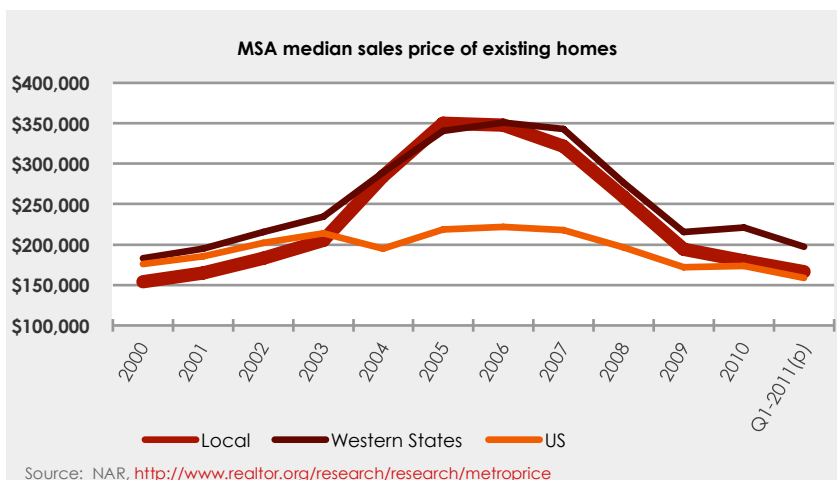


Having the right technology is critical for your business or life needs. New technologies may require new training, but also provide opportunities for business creation and denote the ability to welcome new ways of problem solving, and often, greater productivity. Innovative technology infrastructure also attracts creative knowledge workers able to drive new economic growth. Limited data is currently available.

Innovation Economy Index						
2010 Index		Index components				
		Inputs & capacity		State context	Outputs	
		Human capital	Economic dynamics		Productivity & employment	Economic wellbeing
Washoe County	101.4	93.9	83.7		127.9	97.1
Nevada	90.3	88.4	87.2	31.7	92.3	99.5
US	100	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Innovation in America Regions, http://www.statsamerica.org/innovation/innovation_index/index_display.asp

Housing is usually a family's largest expense, greatly impacting self-sufficiency. Higher housing prices led many families to move outside population density areas in recent years. Transportation costs rise dramatically when families live farther away from the area they work and shop; and maintenance costs for road infrastructure increase.



24. Affordable housing

Trend	Washoe County measure	Data
↘	Housing Opportunity Index (Q1-2011 median sales price/ median family income)	\$175,000 \$71,200
↓	median sales price of existing homes (Q1-2011, local/ western/ US)	\$166,300 \$197,400 \$158,700
↘	owner-occupied housing (2010 owner/ renter-occupied)	58.5% 41.5%

Comparable western MSA's median sales prices for Q1-2011 (preliminary):

\$190,500	Salt Lake City, UT
\$167,700	Albuquerque, NM
\$128,300	Las Vegas, NV
\$127,300	Boise, ID

26. Mobility & convenience

No one wants health problems breathing pollutants in traffic congestion. Access to physical infrastructure, affordable and reliable transportation, and alternative modes indicates a diversity of other options.

Trend	Washoe County measure	Data
↔	transportation mode split (2009 workers ≥16 years who drove alone)	79.6%
↔	commuters mean travel time to work (2009 minutes)	21.0
↘	bus ridership (Q1-2011, RTC Access paratransit riders/ millions of RTC Transit riders)	158,868 5.709
↗	air traffic (2010 million passengers/ million pounds cargo)	3.823 113.017

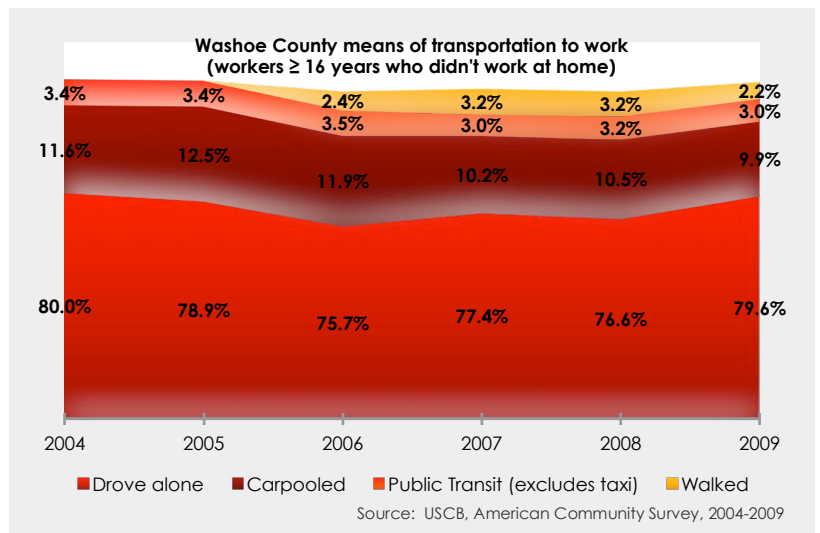


Planning for active healthy lifestyles requires dedicated acres for public parks, multi-use trails and pedestrian-ways. It reduces neighborhood congestion while conserving energy, fuel cost and repaving. Parks also improve property values and discourage negative behavior.

The [Rails-to-Trails, Active Transportation for America, 2008](#) study found that that more than 50% of current car-trips (e.g., errands) could be completed within a 20-minute bicycle ride, and 25% of trips within a 20-minute walk. The [Reno/Sparks Regional Bikeway Master Plan](#) is underway to map all regional bikeways and sidewalks, in order to develop consistent design standards and secure funding for future projects.

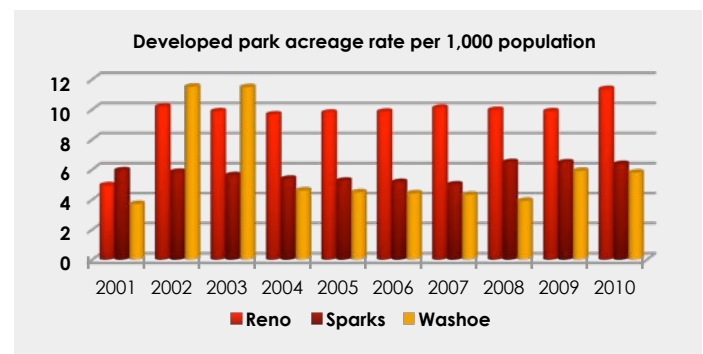
30. Open space access & connectivity

Trend	Washoe County measure	Data
↗	regional parks & open space (2010 open space acres available to users)	10,535
↗	miles of multi-use trails (2011)	158



27. Development that encourages healthy lifestyles & neighborhood livability

Trend	Washoe County measure	Data
↑	established miles of bikeways (2010)	43
↘	pedestrian & bicycle commuters (2009 percentage of workers ≥16 years commuting by bicycle/ walked)	0.6% 2.2%
↔	acres of parklands (2010 rate per 1,000 population Reno/ Sparks/ Washoe County)	11.35 6.36 5.79
New	access to healthy foods (2008 data/ 2011 ranking year—residential Zip codes)	63%



Source: Reno, <http://www.reno.gov/index.aspx?page=1140>; Sparks, http://cityofsparks.us/sites/default/files/assets/documents/finance/City_of_Sparks_Searchable_CAFR_FY10.pdf; Washoe County, <http://washoecounty.us/repository/files/33/Statistical2010.pdf>

Public access points and connections to trail networks and greenways, point to the preservation of access to federal lands and open spaces for future generations. In addition to enhancing property values, the surrounding open space absorbs pollutants and runoff. As the region grows, connected multi-use trails will become more of a need. Meaningful data remains limited at this time.

32. Secure families

Trend	Washoe County measure	Data
↗	domestic violence (2009 incident reports/ children present)	4,070 354
↔	child abuse referral & placement (2010 child welfare investigations/ children in legal custody/ average days in paid foster care/ adoptions completed)	2,371 771 452 138
↔	substantiated reports of child abuse & neglect (2008 reports/ % substantiated/ 2009 Nevada child victim rate per 1,000 children)	2,632 22.5% 6.5
↔	elder abuse (2010 reports/ % substantiated)	1,406 33%

Reported and substantiated cases of child, spousal/partner, or senior abuse and neglect are indicators of volatile family situations. Data also point to the societal costs for law enforcement response and judicial time, in addition to lost productivity and wages. More working families may be forced to leave their children with family or other caregivers, as costs rise for licensed childcare facilities, without wage increases.

Do you have an idea to transform the Truckee Meadows and make quality of life better for the residents in northern Nevada? Visit [TMT's blog](#) and share your thoughts on innovation.

33. Community responsiveness to its most vulnerable populations

Trend	Washoe County measure	Data
↗	populations living in poverty (5-year average 2005-09 poverty rate/ rate <125% federal poverty level)	11.8% 15.4%
↗	children living in poverty (2010 children < 18 years living in family with income below US poverty threshold)	15.7%
↔	homelessness (January 2011 persons on the street/ children identified as homeless during the school year)	175 1,482
↔	licensed childcare (2009 centers/ homes/ total capacity)	119/234 11,152
↑	WIC (Women, Infants & Children 2009 annual change in statewide participation/ average food package cost)	11.55% \$52.95
↗	developmental childhood services (2009-10 school year students qualifying for free & reduced-cost lunch program)	41.3%
↘	food security (2010 food hardship rate Nevada/ US/ state rank)	20.3/18.0 17 th
↑	SNAP (2009 households with cash public assistance income/ SNAP food stamp benefits in past 12-months)	2.6% 6%
↗	Nevada 2-1-1 calls (Q1-2011 statewide calls)	17,003

Our community's response to individual and family difficulties ensures that those in need are provided opportunities to achieve their full potential. Public assistance helps many working families buy nutritious food, pay for childcare, sleep safely and search for work. It also ensures local economic activity for the very same reasons.

The [Economic Policy Institute](#) estimates that a family of four living in the Reno-Sparks MSA in 2007 (most recent year available), needed \$3,370 monthly just to cover basic needs—housing, food, childcare, transportation, healthcare, taxes and other necessities. Since that time, many of Nevada's families can no longer afford these necessities, putting greater pressure on strained public and nonprofit health and human service agencies.

TMT thanks Zanny Marsh and Amber Martin-Jahn, and the following organizations that sponsored indicators highlighted in this briefing.



Photos courtesy of the City of Reno, Redevelopment; NV Energy; and Washoe County Library System