



MARKET STUDY

for the **VILLAGE OF BARNESVILLE, OHIO**

AUGUST 2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is a reflection of the collaborative effort and commitment of everyone involved to foster economic growth along the commercial corridors along Main and Chestnut Streets and beyond. Special thanks to the Community Improvement Corporation of Belmont County and the Village of Barnesville's local business leaders and residents for sharing their perspectives on current market needs and aspirations.

Produced by Atlas Community Studios, a team specializing in project implementation and the pre-development work needed to be implementation-ready, including research, planning, funding strategies, grant writing, and advocacy.

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The results of this study do not guarantee the achievement of any specific outcome or success. The real estate market, economic conditions, regulatory environments, and numerous other factors beyond the control of any party can affect the results of any redevelopment effort. Any decision to proceed with a project or investment based on the contents of the study should be made only after careful consideration of all relevant factors, including independent financial, legal, and technical advice.

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Executive Summary

The Barnesville Market Study was commissioned to inform the Village of Barnesville's vision planning process by identifying current market conditions, economic trends, and data-driven opportunities for growth. Funded through Kansas State University's Technical Assistance to Brownfields (KSU TAB) program in partnership with the Community Improvement Corporation of Belmont County and Atlas Community Studios, the study focuses on the commercial corridors along Main and Chestnut Streets and considers broader trends across the 43713 ZIP code and surrounding region.

KEY FINDINGS



POPULATION & ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Since 2020, Barnesville's population has declined to approximately **3,918 residents**, reflecting broader rural trends. The community is aging, with fewer working-age adults and relatively low levels of educational attainment. More than half of all households earn under \$50,000 per year, and **one in five residents lives in poverty**. Many households fall below the local living wage threshold.



HOUSING STOCK & AFFORDABILITY

Most homes in Barnesville are older, with nearly **40 percent built before 1940** and limited new construction in recent decades. While homeowners tend to be stable, **two-thirds of renters are cost-burdened**. Vacant housing exists, but few properties are listed for sale or rent, and many are likely not move-in ready.



COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

The village supports over **200 businesses and nearly 1,900 jobs**, primarily concentrated along Main and Chestnut Streets. A 2025 inventory identified 243 commercial and industrial parcels, with the largest number of potential brownfield sites located in the southern and eastern sections of the village.

KEY FINDINGS (CONTINUED)



BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT & REUSE CHALLENGES

While Barnesville maintains a stable base of essential services, many downtown properties remain vacant or underused. Stakeholders expressed **frustration with absentee ownership, deferred maintenance, and a lack of clear reuse plans**. However, projects like the State Theater restoration and AMfg Labs redevelopment show that **targeted investment can unlock reuse potential**.



CONSUMER SPENDING & RETAIL DEMAND

Households within a 15-minute drive spend **nearly \$300 million annually, with strong demand for food, healthcare, and transportation**. Residents frequently leave town to shop or dine, especially for sit-down meals, apparel, and entertainment. **Retail leakage remains high** due to limited local options and inconvenient hours.



LABOR MARKET AND WORKFORCE BARRIERS

Labor force participation is slightly lower than the national average, and employers struggle to hire in sectors such as healthcare, transportation, and skilled trades. Barriers to employment include **low wages, limited child care, a lack of training opportunities, and unreliable transportation**. Most residents travel elsewhere for work, while many jobs in Barnesville are filled by commuters from surrounding areas.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

The study identifies three market-supported opportunities and a fourth option grounded in community priorities.



OPEN A FULL-SERVICE SIT-DOWN RESTAURANT

Recruit a locally owned dining establishment to meet strong community demand and reduce retail leakage.



ACTIVATE THE DEPOT GROUNDS WITH SEASONAL EVENTS

Use the Depot Grounds for recurring events, such as farmers' markets or artisan fairs, to increase foot traffic and support new vendors.



ATTRACT A SPECIALTY RETAIL STORE THAT SERVES LOCAL & REGIONAL SHOPPERS

Recruit a specialty clothing or shoe store, or an outdoor-focused retail business that caters to activities like fishing, hunting, or hiking.



REPOSITION THE WATT CENTER AS A COMMUNITY & HERITAGE VENUE

Expand programming and promote the Watt Center as a destination for cultural activities, heritage tourism, and local events.

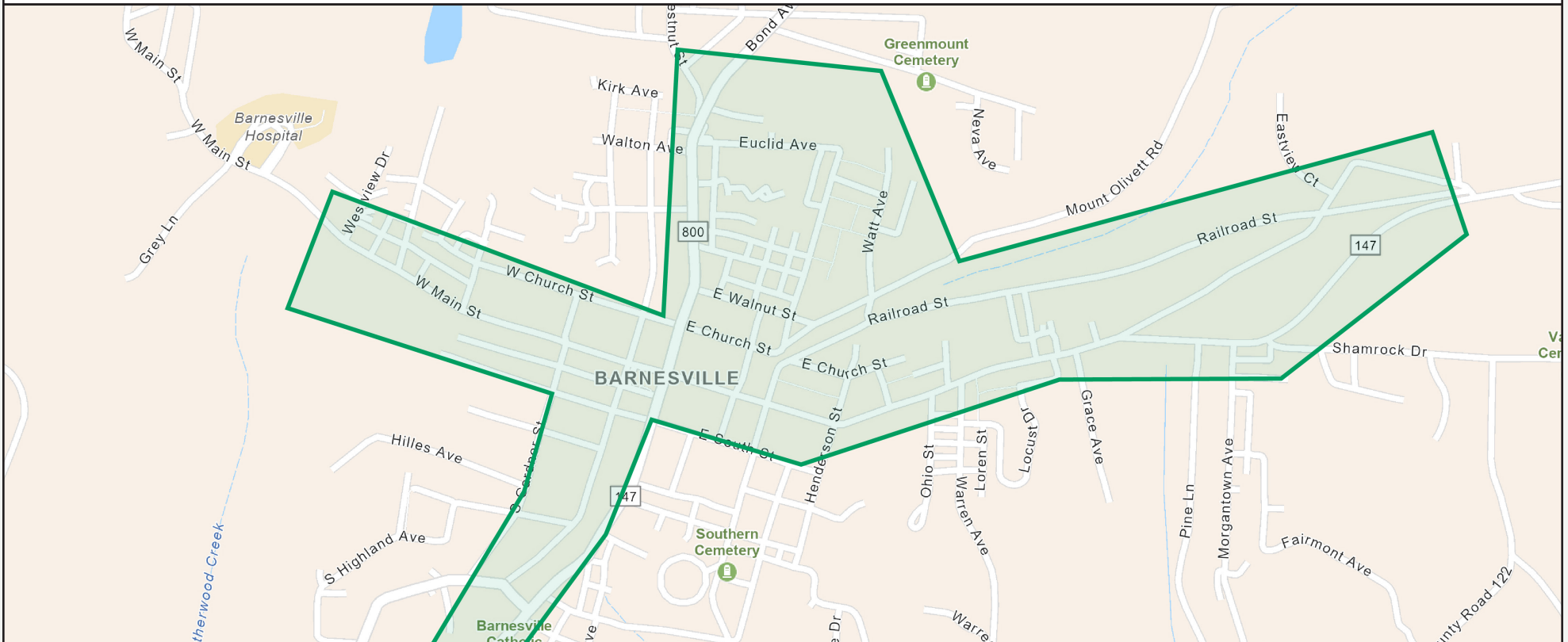
CONCLUSION

Barnesville boasts a walkable downtown, a strong sense of identity, and affordable commercial space, yet it also faces significant challenges. Aging infrastructure, limited workforce capacity, and a shortage of move-in-ready buildings hinder growth. This study lays the groundwork for coordinated action by identifying clear market opportunities and linking them to local priorities and assets.

Introduction

IN THIS SECTION

Purpose & Funding
Goals & Objectives
Defined Project Area
Methodology & Limitations
Review of Existing Plans & Studies



DEFINED PROJECT AREA

This study focuses on the commercial corridors along Main Street and Chestnut Street in Barnesville, along with nearby blocks and connecting streets that make up the broader commercial core. Together, these areas are referred to as the Project Area. The Project Area includes a mix of small businesses, institutional anchors, and

vacant or underutilized buildings, including several identified brownfield sites. While the primary emphasis is on this core area, the analysis also considers broader market influences from the surrounding 43713 ZIP code, nearby towns, and regional retail hubs such as St. Clairsville and Wheeling.

METHODOLOGY & LIMITATIONS

The study draws on a combination of quantitative and qualitative data sources:

- ESRI Business Analyst and JobsEQ reports
- U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics data
- A community survey with over 850 responses
- Four stakeholder interviews and two focus group sessions with local business leaders and community partners
- Local planning documents and economic development reports

While every effort was made to use the most current and relevant data, the study is subject to several limitations. ESRI retail demand models are based on national spending patterns, which may not fully reflect local preferences or affordability. Stakeholder and survey responses provide important context but may not represent the full diversity of community perspectives. In addition, real estate data for small rural towns is often limited and can be difficult to generalize.

REVIEW OF EXISTING PLANS & STUDIES

This study builds on previous local and regional planning efforts, including:

- Ohio Economic Profile Belmont County (July 2021)
- Downtown Parking (December 2022)
- Village of Barnesville's School Travel Plan (December 2024)
- Draft Village of Barnesville Brownfield Inventory (March 2025)
- Belmont County Economic Development Strategy (May 2011)
- Draft Barnesville Economic Development Game Plan (December 2023)

The findings in this study are meant to give local leaders, businesses, and residents a clearer picture of current market conditions and future opportunities. By grounding recommendations in data and community input, the study offers practical guidance for making informed decisions that support Barnesville's economic growth and revitalization.

Community & Economic Profile

IN THIS SECTION

- Population
- Income
- Poverty
- Educational Attainment
- Unemployment & Labor Force Participation Rates
- Housing Stock
- Vacancy
- Housing Costs

POPULATION

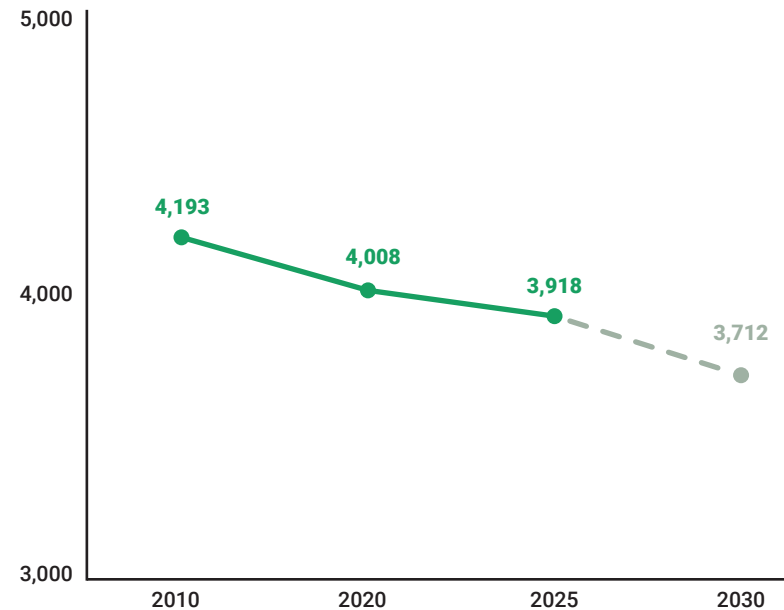
The Village of Barnesville had a population of 4,008 in 2020, down 4.4 percent from 4,193 in 2010. Between 2020 and 2025, the population continued to decline, reaching an estimated 3,918, corresponding to an average annual decrease of approximately 0.4 percent.

This steady decline reflects broader trends in rural Ohio, where small towns are losing population due to aging residents, younger people moving away, and limited local job growth. Even so, Barnesville remains an important center for the surrounding rural communities.

The population is 94.3 percent white, with limited racial and ethnic diversity. About 28.7 percent of residents are under 24, while 23 percent are 65 or older. This indicates a maturing population and raises concerns about future workforce shortages unless the community can retain or attract more working-age adults.

POPULATION (2010-2030)

2030 projected; Source: ESRI



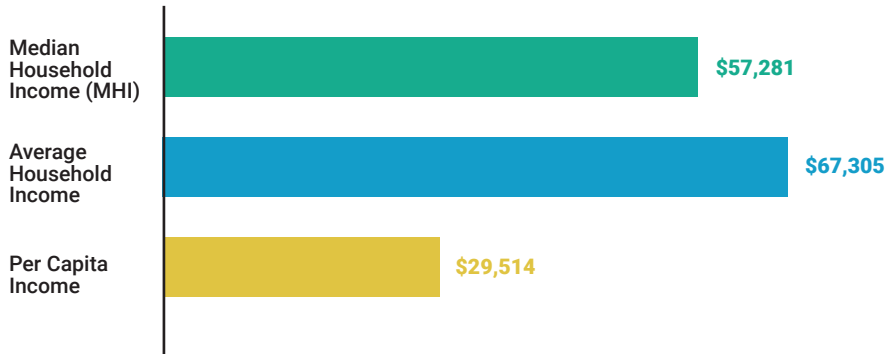
POPULATION BY RACE/ETHNICITY

Source: ESRI

White	94.3%
Black	1.0%
American Indian	0.2%
Asian	0.3%
Pacific Islander	0.0%
Hispanic	1.0%

INCOME ESTIMATES (2025)

Source: ESRI



By 2030 MHI: **\$61,063** AVG: **\$73,975**

HOUSEHOLDS BY INCOME (2025)

Source: ESRI

Income Bracket	Percentage
<\$15,000	14.6%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	15.9%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	3.9%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	9.3%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	22.0%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	12.6%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	15.8%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	2.0%
\$200,000+	3.9%

INCOME

As of 2025, the median household income in Barnesville is estimated at \$57,281. The average household income is \$67,305, and per capita income is \$29,514. These figures are lower than both state and national averages but are expected to grow slowly over the next few years. By 2030, the median household income is projected to reach \$61,063, and the average household income is projected to reach \$73,975.

Despite this modest growth, income inequality remains a concern. About 34 percent of households earn less than \$35,000 per year, and only 5.9 percent earn more than \$150,000. More than 43 percent of all households earn under \$50,000, which limits access to market-rate housing and reduces overall spending power in the village.

Looking at disposable income, which refers to what’s left after taxes, the median is about \$46,983 in 2025. 16.4 percent of households have less than \$15,000 in disposable income, and only 14.9 percent have more than \$100,000. These figures help explain spending patterns, financial pressure, and the challenges many families face in affording local housing and essential services.

When compared to the local cost of living, many households in Barnesville are stretched thin. According to the [MIT Living Wage Calculator](#), a single adult in Belmont County needs to earn at least \$18.77 per hour

(or about \$39,000 annually) to meet basic needs. For a household with two working adults and two children, each adult would need to earn at least \$26.20 per hour, which equals a combined income of over \$109,000.

With close to half of local households earning under \$50,000, it’s clear that many families may struggle to meet these basic cost-of-living benchmarks. This gap highlights the importance of supporting workforce development, expanding access to higher-wage jobs, and investing in affordable housing and essential services.

LIVING WAGE (BELMONT COUNTY)

Source: MIT Living Wage Calculator

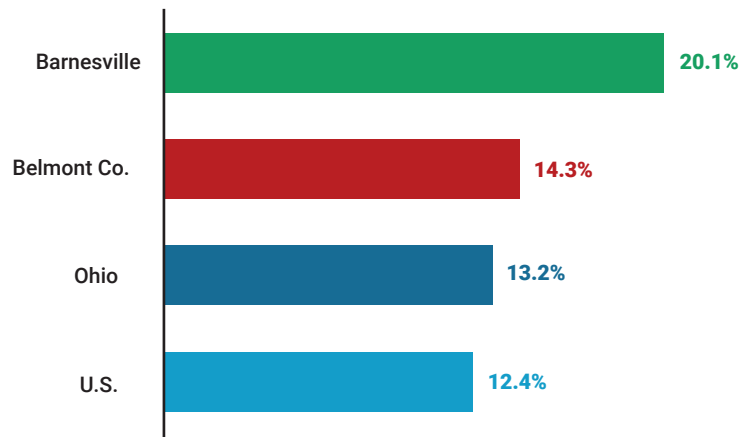
	1 ADULT			2 ADULTS (1 WORKING)			2 ADULTS (BOTH WORKING)		
	0 children	1 child	2 children	0 children	1 child	2 children	0 children	1 child	2 children
Living Wage	\$18.77	\$36.20	\$47.30	\$27.61	\$32.50	\$36.18	\$13.77	\$20.55	\$26.20

POVERTY

The poverty rate in Barnesville is 20.1 percent, which is higher than the rates for Belmont County (14.3 percent), Ohio (13.2 percent), and the national average (12.4 percent). This means that about one in five residents in the village lives below the poverty line, highlighting the need for ongoing support services, job training, and affordable housing options.

POVERTY RATE

Source: ACS 5-Year (2019-2023)



EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

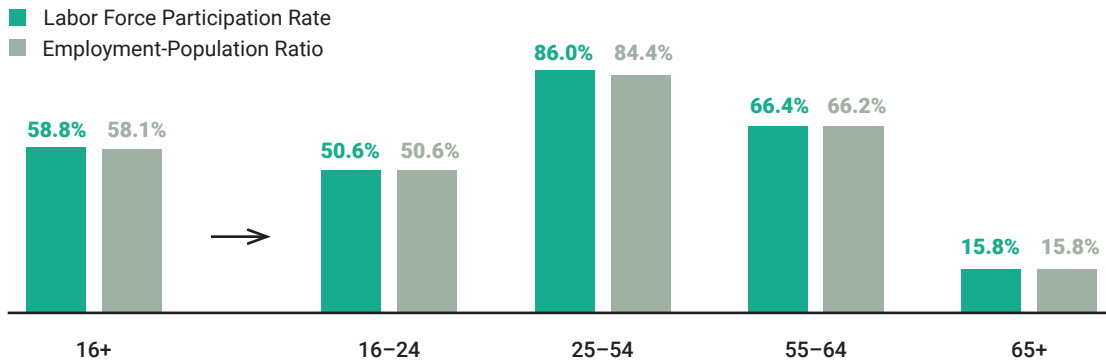
As of 2025, Barnesville has an estimated 2,795 residents age 25 or older.

High School Diploma	41.3%
Some College, No Degree	13.7%
GED or Alternative Credit	10.6%
Associate Degree	9.1%
Bachelor's Degree	10.8%
Graduate or Professional Degree	6.2%
High School Not Completed	8.4%

These numbers show that most adults in Barnesville have at least a high school diploma, but relatively few have earned a college degree. Compared to state and national averages, the share of residents with a bachelor's or advanced degree is lower. This can limit access to higher-paying jobs, especially in fields that require specialized training or credentials.

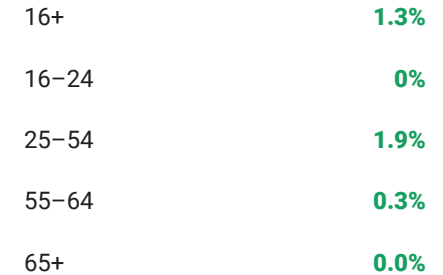
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE & EMPLOYMENT-POPULATION RATIO BY AGE GROUP

Source: ESRI



UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Source: ESRI



UNEMPLOYMENT & LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES

Barnesville’s population age 16 and older is 3,204, and the labor force includes 1,860 people from that group. That equates to a labor force participation rate of 58.8 percent. The reported unemployment rate is just 1.3 percent. Employment spans multiple age groups, with the following percentages employed:

- 50.6 percent of residents ages 16 to 24
- 84.4 percent of adults ages 25 to 54
- 66.4 percent of adults ages 55 to 64
- 15.8 percent of residents age 65 and older

These figures show that Barnesville has a core group of working-age adults (ages 25 to 54) who are employed at relatively high rates. Notably, the unemployment rate is reported as zero percent for residents ages 16 to 24 and those 65 and older. In addition, the overall labor force participation rate is 58.8 percent, just below the national average of 62.3 percent. This combination of low unemployment and moderate participation may reflect a tight labor market, but it could also indicate a limited supply of available workers rather than an abundance of job opportunities.

HOUSING STOCK

Much of Barnesville’s housing is older. According to the American Community Survey, nearly 39 percent of all housing units were built before 1940, with a median year of construction in 1957. New construction has been limited in recent decades, with only 10.7 percent of homes built since 2010. The age of the housing stock contributes to ongoing maintenance needs and likely reduces energy efficiency in many homes, which can increase utility costs and make older homes less appealing to potential buyers or renters.

VACANCY

According to the American Community Survey, there are 257 vacant housing units in Barnesville. Of these, 38.5 percent are classified as “other vacant,” a category that often includes homes in poor condition or not actively listed for sale or rent. Another 28.4 percent are seasonal or occasional-use properties. Only 12.8 percent of vacant units are available for rent, and 20.2 percent are listed for sale.

These figures suggest that, while there are a number of vacant homes in Barnesville, relatively few are move-in ready or available for sale on the market.



1957

Median Year of Construction



UNITS BY YEAR BUILT

Source: ACS 5-Year (2019-2023)

Built 2010 or later	10.7%
Built 2000 to 2009	3.2%
Built 1990 to 1999	8.3%
Built 1980 to 1989	4.3%
Built 1970 to 1979	10.9%
Built 1960 to 1969	9.2%
Built 1950 to 1959	9.7%
Built 1940 to 1949	4.7%
Built 1939 or earlier	38.9%



257

Total Vacant Units

UNITS BY YEAR BUILT

Source: ACS 5-Year (2019-2023)

For rent	12.8%
For sale only	20.2%
Seasonal/occasional	28.4%
Other	38.5%

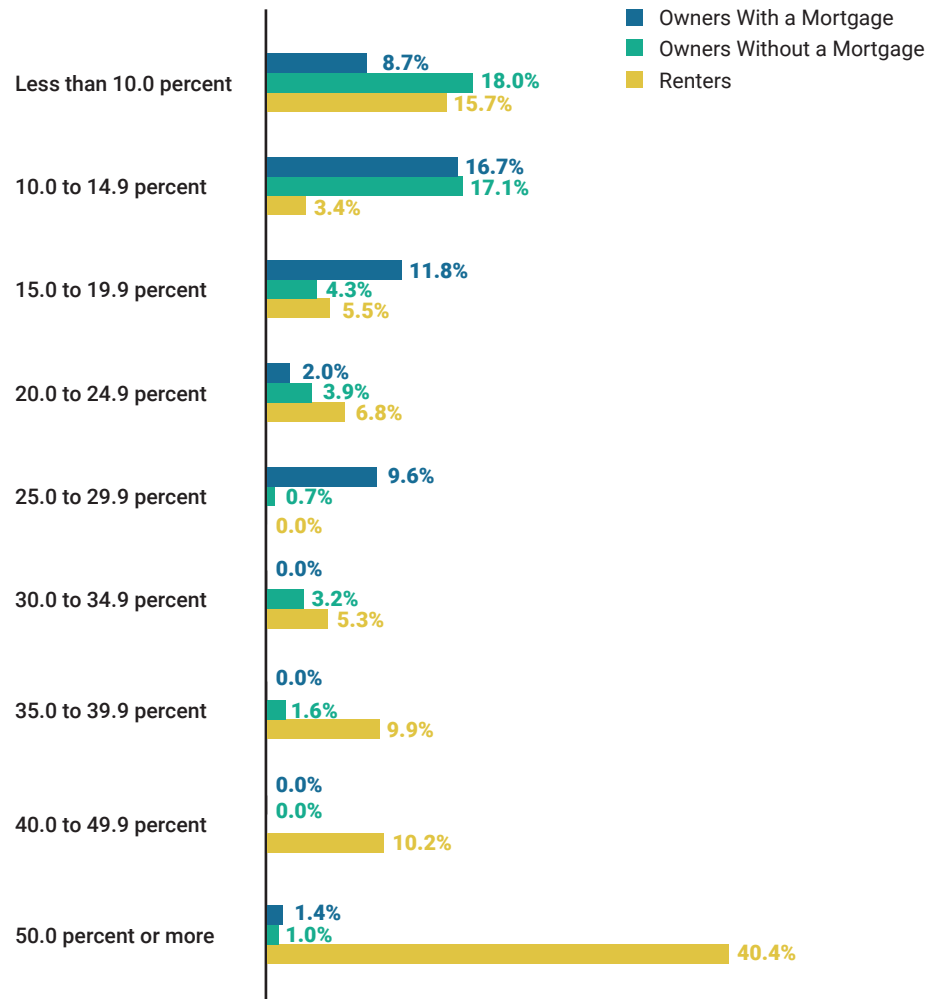
HOUSING COSTS

Most homeowners in Barnesville spend a relatively small share of their income on housing. Among the 887 owner-occupied households, nearly 60 percent pay less than 20 percent of their income toward housing each month. Only 2.4 percent are severely cost-burdened, meaning they spend 50 percent or more of their income on housing. Cost burden is slightly more common among owners without a mortgage, but remains low overall.

Renters face a very different situation. Nearly 66 percent of renter households are cost-burdened, spending 30 percent or more of their income on rent. More than 40 percent are severely burdened, paying at least half of their income toward housing. These numbers point to serious affordability challenges for renters and suggest that many are at risk of financial instability if faced with an unexpected expense.

MONTHLY COSTS AS A PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

Source: ACS 5-Year (2019-2023)



KEY TAKEAWAYS



BARNESVILLE'S POPULATION IS SLOWLY DECLINING, a trend that reflects patterns across many rural communities.

An aging population and the loss of younger residents may affect the future size and strength of the local workforce.



Household incomes are rising slowly, but **MORE THAN HALF OF ALL HOUSEHOLDS EARN LESS THAN \$50,000 A YEAR.**

Many families fall below local living wage benchmarks, especially those with children or a single income.



The poverty rate in Barnesville is high, affecting **ONE IN FIVE RESIDENTS.** This is well above the county, state, and national averages.



A large share of homes in Barnesville are old, with nearly **40 PERCENT BUILT BEFORE 1940.**

Very little new housing has been built in recent years, which raises concerns about long-term maintenance and energy efficiency.



Most working-age adults are employed, and labor force participation is strong among residents aged 25 to 54. However, the small number of younger workers and **LOW LEVELS OF HIGHER EDUCATION MAY LIMIT THE VILLAGE'S ABILITY TO ATTRACT OR GROW INDUSTRIES** that require advanced skills.



Most homeowners are not heavily burdened by housing costs, but renters face much greater pressure. About two-thirds of renters are cost-burdened, and **MORE THAN 40 PERCENT SPEND HALF OR MORE OF THEIR INCOME ON RENT.**



Vacancy is an issue, but many empty homes are not for sale or rent. *Some are likely in poor condition and not move-in ready.*

Without changes to local housing, wage levels, and workforce development systems, these population and affordability trends may limit the village's ability to grow and retain residents in the years ahead.

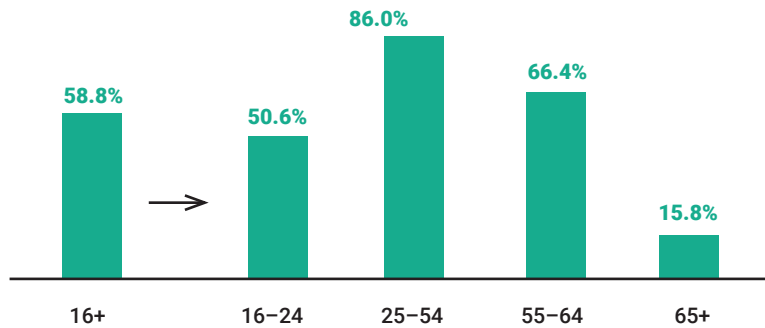
Labor Market & Workforce Conditions

IN THIS SECTION

Labor Force Participation & Unemployment Rates
Key Sectors with Worker Shortages
Commuting Patterns
Local Training Assets & Barriers to Employment
Stakeholder Feedback on Hiring & Skill Gaps

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE

Source: ESRI

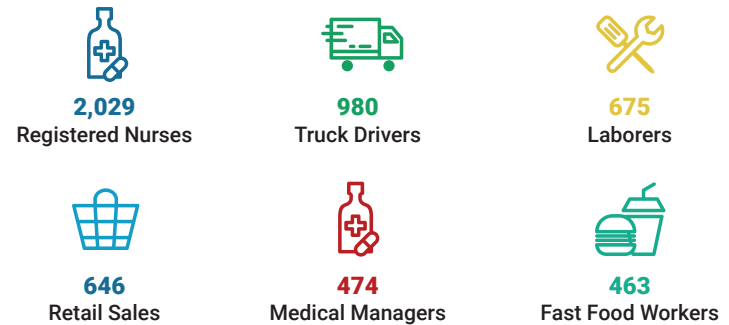


LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION & UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

Barnesville’s population age 16 and older is 3,204, and the labor force includes 1,860 people, resulting in a labor force participation rate of 58.8 percent, slightly below the national average of 62.3 percent. The unemployment rate for this group is 1.3 percent. Most working-age adults are participating in the workforce, but some residents remain out of the labor force, possibly due to limited job opportunities, low wages, transportation barriers, or caregiving responsibilities.

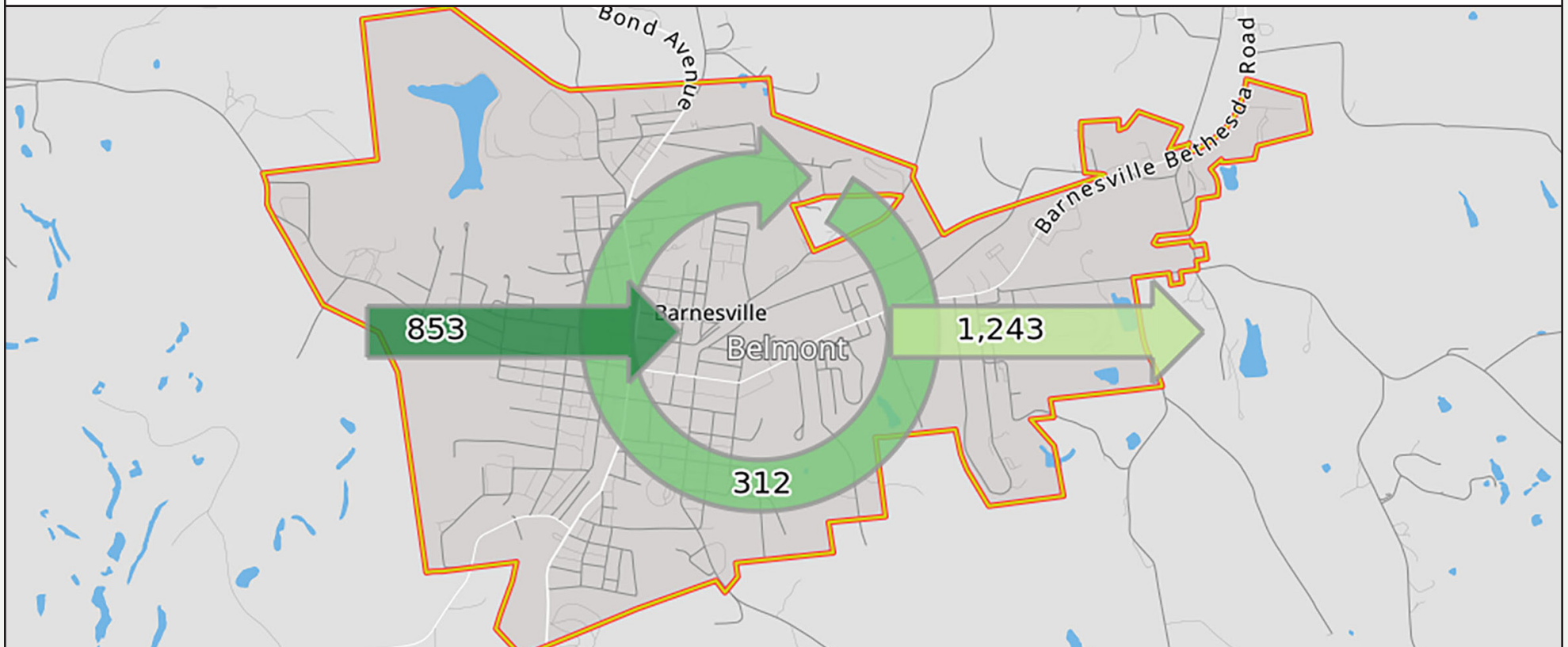
JOB POSTINGS

Source: JobsEQ



KEY SECTORS WITH WORKER SHORTAGES

Employers consistently report difficulty hiring in healthcare, transportation, and skilled trades. This is backed by job postings and employment data showing high demand in those fields. Healthcare jobs, particularly support roles, are among the most common in Barnesville, and postings for truck drivers, warehouse workers, and production workers remain steady. Food service and retail employers also report persistent hiring challenges, driven in part by low wages and high turnover. Residents and business owners alike point to inconsistent hours and limited job stability as common concerns in these sectors.



COMMUTING PATTERNS

Barnesville is a commuter town. Just over 65% of residents travel outside the village for work, often heading to larger employment centers in Cambridge, St. Clairsville, or Wheeling. At the same time, roughly 850 workers commute into Barnesville daily, largely for jobs in healthcare, education, and retail. This flow of

workers highlights the mismatch between local housing options, job availability, and workforce readiness. It also suggests that with the right mix of better-paying, flexible jobs and support services, more residents might choose to live and work locally rather than commute elsewhere.

LOCAL TRAINING ASSETS & BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Workforce training options are limited in Barnesville. Most training programs are located in nearby cities like St. Clairsville or Cambridge, which creates a barrier for residents without reliable transportation. Local employers and residents alike say that entry-level workers often lack both technical and soft skills. This skills gap reflects the broader educational profile of the community, where fewer than 18 percent of adults hold a bachelor's or graduate degree. Survey responses also highlight limited child care, transportation, and flexible work options as key barriers to employment, especially for parents. Several residents noted that many local jobs pay \$12 per hour or less, which is not enough to support basic living expenses.

Lack of nice restaurants, nice coffee shops, hotels, and things to do. I need talent to move to Barnesville to work for me, but need them to want to move to Barnesville because they also like Barnesville.

– community stakeholder response

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK ON HIRING & SKILL GAPS

Local employers and residents point to many of the same workforce challenges. Business owners say it is hard to find reliable workers who show up on time, communicate well, and have basic job skills. Residents report that limited job variety and unpredictable schedules discourage them from working locally. Many say they would like to stay in Barnesville to live and work, but only if better jobs are available. There is also broad support for expanding job training, creating school-to-career pipelines, and investing in support services like childcare and transportation. These support services are essential not only for individual workers, but also for strengthening the local labor pool and making it more feasible for employers to operate in Barnesville. At the same time, the lack of activities and amenities for families and young people was frequently mentioned as a barrier to attracting and retaining workers.

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Employers **STRUGGLE TO FILL JOBS** in healthcare, skilled trades, transportation, retail, and food service.

Low wages, high turnover, and unpredictable schedules are common challenges.



Workforce training is limited locally, and many residents face barriers like **LACK OF CHILDCARE, TRANSPORTATION, OR FLEXIBLE WORK HOURS.**

Entry-level workers often need both technical and soft skills support.



Residents and employers agree on the challenges. People want **BETTER-PAYING JOBS, MORE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES, AND IMPROVED SUPPORT SERVICES** to help them enter and stay in the workforce.



Barnesville is a commuter community. A majority of residents work outside the village, while **OVER 800 PEOPLE TRAVEL TO BARNESVILLE DAILY FOR LOCAL JOBS.**

This mismatch points to a need for more local jobs that pay well and offer reliable schedules.



Labor force participation in Barnesville is **58.8 PERCENT**, slightly below the national average of 62.3 percent.

Commercial Real Estate, Infrastructure, & Business Climate

IN THIS SECTION

Property Inventory & Building Conditions
Commercial Lease Rates & Regional Comparison
Infrastructure, Accessibility, & Development Readiness
Blight, Vacancy & Reuse Momentum

PROPERTY INVENTORY & BUILDING CONDITIONS

Barnesville supports 213 businesses and roughly 1,875 jobs. Commercial activity is largely concentrated along Main and Chestnut Streets, where businesses include banks, pharmacies, grocery stores, restaurants, healthcare offices, and personal services. Many are independently owned and span sectors like retail, construction, and healthcare.

In 2025, a brownfield inventory identified 243 commercial and industrial parcels across Barnesville. The southern and eastern sections of the village contain the highest concentrations of potential brownfield sites, generally reflecting past land uses and aging infrastructure.

Across the village, building conditions vary. While many properties are in active use, others are underused or show signs of deterioration.

Some are in visible downtown locations where long-term vacancy, poor maintenance, or unclear ownership have prevented reinvestment. Several stakeholders mentioned the challenge of finding commercial space that is move-in ready, while others pointed to buildings that appear stuck, with no clear plan for sale, renovation, or redevelopment.

Even with these challenges, the village maintains a stable base of essential services. Businesses such as pharmacies, medical offices, grocery stores, and financial institutions continue to attract regular traffic and provide a foundation for future growth. Downtown properties such as the Watt Center and the Depot Grounds were named by residents as priority sites for reuse, particularly for civic or community-oriented activities.

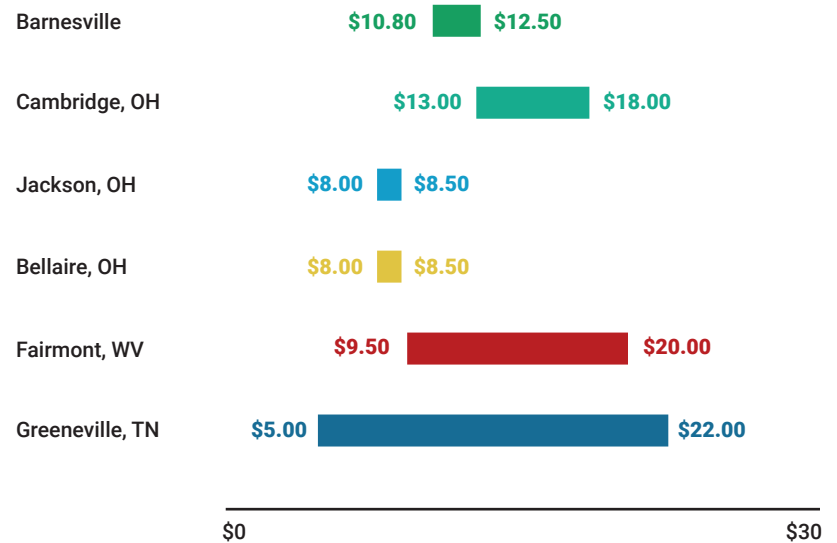
COMMERCIAL LEASE RATES & REGIONAL COMPARISON

Commercial space in Barnesville typically rents for between \$10.80 and \$12.50 per square foot per year. These listings are usually for retail, office, or restaurant space between 3,300 and 4,000 square feet in visible locations such as Main Street. The average rate of \$11.65 per square foot is competitive for the region.

When compared to similar Appalachian towns, Barnesville ranks near the middle:

- **Cambridge, OH:** \$13.00 to \$18.00 per square foot
- **Jackson, OH and Bellaire, OH:** \$8.00 to \$8.50 per square foot
- **Waynesburg, PA:** \$13.00 in a fully leased shopping center
- **Fairmont, WV:** \$9.50 to \$20.00 depending on condition and location
- **Greeneville, TN:** \$5.00 to \$22.00 depending on visibility and format

COMMERCIAL RENT



Barnesville’s rates reflect the age of its building stock and the limited supply of modern space. Low rents may appeal to small businesses, but only if the properties are well-maintained and ready for use. Without investment in repairs or upgrades, low rent alone may not be enough to attract new tenants.

INFRASTRUCTURE, ACCESSIBILITY, & DEVELOPMENT READINESS

Barnesville's downtown has ample public parking. On-street spaces and nearby lots are available throughout the commercial area, and parking is free. Even so, some residents find parallel parking on South Chestnut Street frustrating, especially for quick errands or for older drivers.

The village is generally walkable, but sidewalk conditions vary. Cracked pavement, uneven surfaces, narrow crossings, and limited lighting make some areas difficult to navigate, especially for seniors or people with disabilities. Many downtown buildings are still not ADA-accessible. These barriers discourage visits and limit mobility. They can also make it harder to attract new businesses that rely on steady foot traffic, especially restaurants, retailers, and service providers seeking visible and accessible storefronts.

Sidewalk repairs and crosswalk upgrades came up frequently in survey responses as low-cost changes that would improve public safety and the visitor experience. Drainage issues and neglected buildings were also noted as concerns.

*We could also stand to **clean up sidewalks and downtown** to be more “modern” and look like it has been used in the last decade instead of falling into ruin.*

— community survey response

Most of the properties identified for reuse already have access to basic infrastructure such as water and sewer. Barnesville also participates in two Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDDs) just north and east of the village. These districts may support future business expansion and infrastructure improvements outside the village limits.

BLIGHT, VACANCY & REUSE MOMENTUM

Survey and interview feedback point to a general concern with blight and visible vacancy. In the community survey, 70 percent of respondents rated local infrastructure as fair or poor. More than half said that vacant or blighted buildings are holding the town back.

*“I believe the Watt Center would be better utilized if sold and transformed into a commercial business, **with the agreement that the historic integrity of the building is preserved.** This could include scheduled open house days or community events that allow the public to continue enjoying and appreciating its rich history.”*

– community survey response

Several buildings downtown remain empty despite being in prime locations. Some have been vacant for years. Business owners and residents expressed frustration with property owners who have made little effort to maintain or sell these buildings. In many cases, uncertainty about environmental conditions or the need for repairs has kept buildings off the market.

Despite these challenges, there are signs of progress. The restoration of the [Barnesville State Theater](#), supported by over \$400,000 in grants, donations, and community fundraising, is well underway. Local volunteers and civic groups have rallied around the project, which is seen as a symbol of downtown renewal.

Another recent project, [the redevelopment of a vacant downtown site](#) into a two-story office building for AMfg Labs, shows that state and regional investment can help bring key properties back into productive use.

Other sites, like the Watt Center and Depot Grounds, continue to be named by residents as opportunities for tourism, community use, or events. Moving these efforts forward will require targeted investments, cleanup funding, and technical support.

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Barnesville has a stable base of 213 businesses, but **MANY COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS ARE UNDERUSED OR IN POOR CONDITION.**



Projects like the State Theater restoration and AMfg Labs redevelopment show that **PUBLIC AND PRIVATE REINVESTMENT CAN DRIVE REUSE.**



LEASE RATES AVERAGE \$11.65 PER SQUARE FOOT, which is affordable for the region but not enough to overcome poor building conditions.



A 2025 inventory flagged **243 COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL PARCELS**, with environmental concerns concentrated in the south and east.



VACANT BUILDINGS, particularly downtown, remain off the market due to poor maintenance, unclear ownership, or environmental issues.



Downtown is walkable and offers free parking, but **UNEVEN SIDEWALKS AND LIMITED ADA ACCESS DISCOURAGE VISITS.**



Most jobs are in retail, healthcare, and food service, but **SLOW GROWTH AND PERMITTING CHALLENGES** limit new business activity.

Consumer Spending & Market Demand

IN THIS SECTION

Key Spending Categories & Local Capture
Local Shopping Behavior & Retail Leakage
Demand for Restaurants, Retail, Services & Entertainment
Summary of Overrepresented & Underrepresented Businesses

KEY SPENDING CATEGORIES & LOCAL CAPTURE

Households within a 15-minute drive of Barnesville spend an average of \$75,595 per year. Most of that goes toward housing (\$23,627), transportation (\$9,201), food (\$8,524), and healthcare (\$6,822). Altogether, annual household spending totals nearly \$300 million. Of that, people in the area spend:

- \$33.7 million on food, including \$22.6 million on groceries and \$11.1 million on dining out
- \$27 million on healthcare
- \$36.4 million on transportation
- \$12.8 million on entertainment and recreation

While spending in some categories is below the national average, these figures show strong demand for everyday goods, services, and amenities, especially those that support families, wellness, and quality of life.

Spending is lower on items like clothing, electronics, and furniture, likely due to both limited local availability and the convenience of either traveling to nearby cities or shopping online.



\$75,595

Average Annual Spending of Households within 15-minutes of Barnesville



\$23,627

Housing



\$8,524

Food



\$9,201

Transportation



\$6,822

Healthcare



\$299,658,225

Total Annual Spending of Households within 15-minutes of Barnesville

Food	\$33,787,502
Food at Home (Groceries)	\$22,647,840
Food Away from Home (Dining Out)	\$11,139,662
Housing	\$93,659,011
Shelter	\$73,434,721
Utilities	\$20,224,290
Transportation	\$36,471,273
Healthcare	\$27,041,721
Entertainment & Recreation	\$12,855,222

LOCAL SHOPPING BEHAVIOR & RETAIL LEAKAGE

Many residents say they leave Barnesville to shop or eat out, especially for clothing, sit-down meals, and entertainment. Nearby cities like Cambridge and St. Clairsville are common destinations. Even though people would like to support local businesses, they often find that stores in town don't carry what they need or aren't open when it's convenient.

The community values local places like the grocery store, pharmacies, and long-standing businesses, but there's a clear gap in what's offered locally compared to what people are looking for. This means money that could be spent in Barnesville is going elsewhere.

DEMAND FOR RESTAURANTS, RETAIL, SERVICES & ENTERTAINMENT

Restaurants are at the top of the list of most-wanted businesses. ESRI data shows that nearly everyone in the area eats at fast food or casual dining restaurants, and many residents specifically mentioned wanting more local places to sit down and eat, especially in the evenings or on weekends.

Survey data shows that residents enjoy visiting sit-down chains like Cracker Barrel, Texas Roadhouse, and Bob Evans when they travel out of town. While bringing a national chain to Barnesville is unlikely, a small, independent restaurant that offers quality food, consistent hours, and a welcoming setting could meet that demand and be well-supported by the community. Other areas where there's steady demand include:

- Apparel and shoe stores
- Health and personal care services
- Hair salons, nail salons, and fitness centers
- Pet supplies and grooming
- Youth- and family-oriented activities

Even capturing a modest share of local spending in these categories could be enough to support a small business, especially with relatively low rent prices in town. For example, based on ESRI consumer expenditure data and typical restaurant performance benchmarks, a sit-down restaurant serving local families and visitors could bring in more than \$500,000 per year—enough to cover costs and make a profit.

WHAT PEOPLE WANT...

CASUAL SIT-DOWN RESTAURANTS
CLOTHING & SHOE STORES
CHILD CARE AND WELLNESS

SPECIALTY SHOPS & GIFT STORES
ENTERTAINMENT VENUES LIKE A
SMALL MOVIE THEATER

INDOOR PLAY AREA
OUTDOOR GEAR OR HOBBY STORES

SUMMARY OF OVERREPRESENTED & UNDERREPRESENTED BUSINESSES

Understanding which business types are already saturated and which are in short supply can help guide reuse planning, support local business recruitment, and reduce retail leakage. Some types of businesses already have a strong presence in Barnesville. These include:

- Fast food restaurants
- Convenience stores
- Pharmacies
- Hardware and flooring stores
- Banks and financial offices

In these areas, the market is close to saturated. New businesses in these sectors would need to offer something very different or significantly better to succeed.

Other types of businesses, however, are in short supply relative to what people want. These include:

- Casual sit-down restaurants
- Clothing and shoe stores
- Personal services like child care and wellness
- Specialty shops and gift stores
- Entertainment venues like a small movie theater or indoor play area
- Stores focused on outdoor gear or hobbies

Residents consistently pointed to these as missing pieces in the local economy. At the same time, market data indicate that these types of businesses can be successful if developed at the right scale and in the right locations. Several long-vacant buildings downtown, as discussed in the prior section, could be well-suited for these types of small businesses if made ready for reuse.

KEY TAKEAWAYS



MANY RESIDENTS LEAVE TOWN TO SHOP OR EAT OUT, especially for sit-down meals, clothing, and entertainment, because local stores often don't carry what they need or aren't open at convenient times.



While Barnesville has a solid base of fast food, banks, and pharmacies, businesses like **SIT-DOWN RESTAURANTS, APPAREL STORES, CHILD CARE PROVIDERS, AND ENTERTAINMENT VENUES** remain underrepresented and could be successful if developed at the right scale.



RESTAURANTS TOP THE LIST OF MOST-WANTED BUSINESSES. A small, independently owned restaurant with quality food and consistent hours could do well.

Other services with steady demand include personal care, fitness, pet services, and family-oriented activities.



Local demand is especially strong for groceries, personal care items, and dining, with residents **SPENDING OVER \$28 MILLION ON FOOD AND BEVERAGES AND \$12 MILLION ON RESTAURANTS** each year.



Households in the Barnesville area **SPEND NEARLY \$300 MILLION ANNUALLY**, with the largest categories being housing, transportation, food, and healthcare.

Market- Supported Opportunities

This section identifies opportunities for investment and business development within the project area. Each opportunity is supported by local market conditions, community feedback, and the current state of commercial properties. The goal is to align specific reuse ideas with community demand and encourage reinvestment in high-visibility properties.



PURSUE A FULL-SERVICE SIT-DOWN RESTAURANT IN THE DOWNTOWN CORE

OPPORTUNITY

Recruit a sit-down restaurant such as a family-friendly diner, café with table service, or casual pub concept to occupy a prominent storefront in the downtown area. Seasonal outdoor seating would be a welcome addition.

RATIONALE

- A sit-down restaurant was the **single most requested business type** in the community survey, with 22 percent of all votes and frequent mentions in write-ins.
- Although 77 percent of residents visit downtown multiple times per week, most **dining options remain limited to fast food or takeout.**
- The **current restaurant mix does not meet local demand**, which contributes to money being spent outside the community.
- Commercial rents are relatively affordable, and residents have expressed a **desire to support locally owned dining options.**

ACTIVATE THE DEPOT GROUNDS WITH SEASONAL MARKETS AND EVENT-ORIENTED RETAIL

OPPORTUNITY

Use the Depot Grounds to host a recurring farmers market, artisan fair, or food truck series to increase foot traffic and test demand for future brick-and-mortar retail.

RATIONALE

- Survey respondents **strongly supported using the Depot Grounds for a year-round or seasonal farmers market**. Many noted past success and called attention to the current absence of similar offerings.
- Community members also asked for **more third spaces and public gathering spots** downtown. These types of uses do not require full building rehab to get started.
- Temporary or seasonal events could support new vendors, increase downtown visitation, and **create momentum** for longer-term uses in nearby storefronts.



*"It would be wonderful to see the Depot Grounds **come alive during the holiday season**—perhaps with a Polar Express-themed event or a festive hot cocoa stand hosted by Santa and his elves. It could become a magical destination for families to make cherished holiday memories."*

— community survey response



ATTRACT A SPECIALTY RETAIL STORE THAT SERVES LOCAL & REGIONAL SHOPPERS

OPPORTUNITY

Recruit a specialty clothing or shoe store, or an outdoor-focused retail business that caters to activities like fishing, hunting, or hiking. A well-curated shop could draw both local residents and visitors from surrounding communities.

RATIONALE

- Community surveys highlighted a strong demand for **expanded shopping options**, particularly clothing and shoes, with occasional interest in niche retail like hobby or outdoor-oriented stores.
- Barnesville residents spend over **\$2.3 million annually on apparel and footwear**, with most of that demand currently leaking to other markets.

- Consumer behavior data shows that 75% of adults buy shoes annually, while 62% purchase men's clothing and 51% buy women's clothing, suggesting a **robust customer base** for a well-targeted retail concept.
- A specialty store with an outdoor recreation focus would **align with regional interests** in hunting, fishing, and camping, where annual household spending exceeds \$300,000.
- Current retail offerings are limited, and **many residents shop online or in nearby cities**, as noted in survey write-ins.
- **Incorporating a small coffee bar into the store** could help draw foot traffic and meet a well-documented local demand for a coffee shop.
- Downtown **lease rates are relatively affordable**, lowering barriers to entry for independent retailers and enhancing feasibility for smaller storefront operations.

“I want to focus on special events and history of the Depot and Watt Center. They are both very important to Barnesville.”

– community survey response

REPOSITION THE WATT CENTER AS A FLEXIBLE COMMUNITY & HERITAGE VENUE

OPPORTUNITY

Expand and promote the Watt Center as a year-round destination for local events, cultural programming, and heritage-based tourism while preserving its historical identity.

RATIONALE

→ The Watt Center for History and the Arts is a **distinctive and architecturally significant building** that already serves as a museum and arts venue. It features original wood paneling, tin ceilings, six vaults, and a historic steam whistle, offering a unique backdrop for expanded programming.

- Survey responses showed **strong support for historical preservation**, local exhibits, and family-friendly activities, as well as a desire for more indoor gathering spaces and community events downtown.
- As a former industrial office building tied to Barnesville’s manufacturing past, the Watt Center is well positioned to **anchor historical walking tours, educational programs, or heritage-based tourism efforts**.
- Its location near the Depot Grounds creates the **potential for coordinated events** that draw visitors to both sites and support downtown businesses.

Conclusion

Barnesville has meaningful assets to build on, including a walkable downtown, dedicated civic leaders, and a base of essential services. At the same time, aging infrastructure, limited workforce participation, underused buildings, and retail leakage continue to constrain growth. This market study outlines several key opportunities for progress, such as recruiting a sit-down restaurant, activating the Depot Grounds, attracting a specialty retail store, and investing in the Watt Center as a cultural anchor. Moving forward, targeted investments, better coordination, and strategic reuse of existing properties can help Barnesville attract new businesses, retain local spending, and strengthen the foundation for long-term economic vitality.