

# Oakland plummets on list of wealthy counties

JERRY WOLFFE | Sep 24, 2010 Updated Jan 3, 2019 | Comments

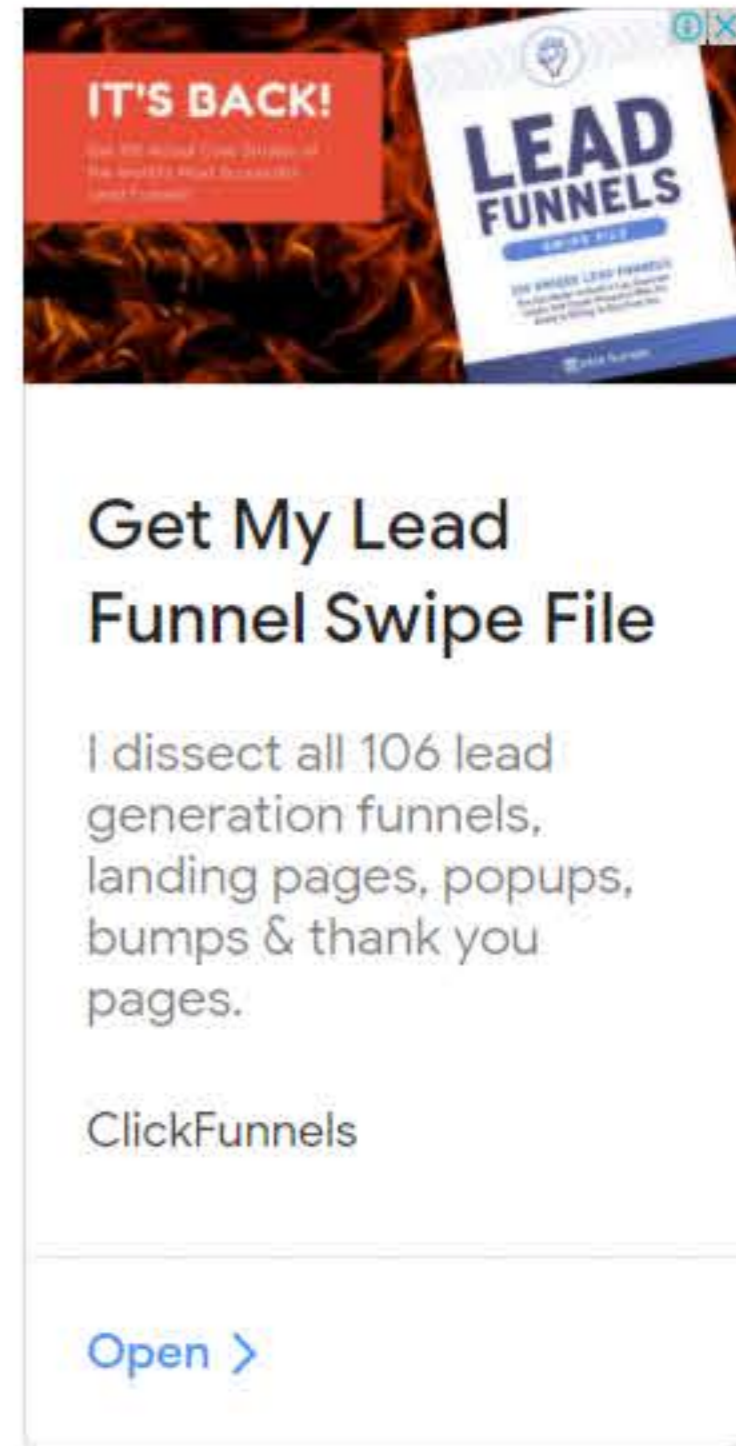


The auto industry implosion and recession has knocked Oakland County from the list of America's wealthiest counties. Oakland County -- once considered the fourth wealthiest county in the country -- is not even among the 25 richest counties in the nation anymore, according to a

Forbes.com survey. Oakland has ranked itself as the 10th richest county based on per capita income, a different variable from that used by

Forbes.com . Census Bureau data shows the recession has reduced the median household income to \$61,907 last year compared with \$103,035 in 2000. Katherine Graham, market research analyst with Oakland County Economic Development, said in a March interview that the county had been ranked as high as the fourth wealthiest with a population of 1 million or more in the nation. Robert J. Daddow, deputy county executive, Friday said, "I suspect we have probably fallen" in county wealth rankings but, "I do not know how we stand now." The "auto implosion" has had a key role in affecting the county's wealth, he said. The U.S. recession, which began in 2007, has resulted in some double-digit increases in joblessness, people receiving food stamps and welfare in Oakland County. Daddow said the economic decline has hit all of the state but, "I suspect we are weathering the storm better than many counties in southeast Michigan." A study released this week by the Michigan League of Human Services also showed dramatic increases in Oakland of residents receiving food stamps, accepting welfare and being unemployed. The unemployment rate in Oakland County increased from April through June 2009 when it was 12.5 percent to 12.9 percent as of the second quarter of 2010. In addition, the report showed the share of Michigan workers who were long-term unemployed (more than 26 weeks) was 6.5 percent in 2000, but 41 percent last year. The number of households in Oakland County receiving food stamps in the second quarter of 2009 was 43,572 compared with 60,369 for the second quarter of 2010, a 38.6 percent increase. The percent of the population receiving welfare in Oakland has climbed to 10.1 percent during the second quarter this year compared with 7.4 percent in the second quarter of 2009. That's a 36.5 percent increase. "These are really alarming increases and signal a growing level of need here in Michigan for help people with basic necessities," said Sharon Parks, president and CEO of Michigan League for Human Services. "We're very concerned about the strength of the safety net in the face of these growing numbers," she added. Michigan's jobless rate in August was 13.1 percent compared with the national average of 9.6 percent, according to the Michigan Labor Market Information website. However, the unemployment rate last August in Michigan was 13.9 percent, indicating a modest improvement in 2010. The number of workers who fell off payrolls in Michigan in August was 50,000, a jump of more than 11 percent in a year. Parks said significant problems facing Michigan are laid-off white-collar workers who haven't found work and chronically unemployed workers. "There's a half-dozen or more job applicants for every open job there is out there," Parks said. "We're not seeing unemployment go down in large numbers." Michigan's unemployed workers dodged a catastrophe in July, the Michigan League for Human Services said. It appeared that 130,000 long-term jobless workers in Michigan were going to prematurely lose their unemployment benefits, MLHS said in its report. At issue was the federally funded Emergency Unemployment Compensation program, which provides up to 53 weeks of benefits to Michigan workers who have exhausted their regular and extended jobless benefits. The program would have to be reauthorized for the unemployed to continue receiving weekly payments. However, there was significant opposition in Congress to an extension. In the end, Congress did extend the Emergency Unemployment Compensation program but "in coming months there will be a significant number of '99ers,'" the report said. Ninety-nine weeks is the maximum number of weeks a jobless worker can receive unemployment benefits. In 2009, some 783,750 Michigan jobs were in occupations with a median wage that was lower than the poverty wage or the amount needed to keep a household out of poverty for a family of four, the MLHS said. It added that 20 percent of workers in Michigan with jobs are living at poverty levels. The poverty level determined by the Census Bureau for a family of four in 2009 was \$22,050. An individual earning \$10,830 or less per year is considered impoverished. The report concluded that "many long-term unemployed workers in Michigan are expected to exhaust their jobless benefits within the next few months. "We must act to strengthen the safety net, which is frayed," the report said. **FYI** The five richest counties in the nation, based on median household income, were: -- Loudoun County, Va., with a median household income of \$110,643. -- Fairfax County, Va., \$106,785. -- Howard County, Md., \$101,710. -- Hunterdon County, N.J., \$100,947. -- Somerset County, N.J., at \$100,207. Source:

Forbes.com  
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