RWJF Culture of Health
Community Portrait

Tampa, Florida
About this report
The Sentinel Communities Surveillance project, conducted by RTI International in collaboration with the RAND Corporation, is sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The project, which began in 2016, will monitor activities related to how a Culture of Health is developing in each of 30 diverse communities around the country for at least five years. This community portrait follows from the initial Snapshot report for Tampa, Flor., and provides insights into drivers of a Culture of Health in the community. The report is not intended to comprehensively describe every action underway in Tampa, but rather focuses on key insights, opportunities, and challenges as a community advances on its journey toward health and well-being for all residents.

The information in this report was obtained using several data collection methods, including key informant telephone interviews, an environmental scan of online and published community-specific materials, review of existing population surveillance and monitoring data, and collection of local data or resources provided by community contacts or interview respondents. Interviews were conducted with individuals representing organizations working in a variety of sectors (for example, health, business, education, faith-based, and environment) in the community. Sector mapping was used to systematically identify respondents in a range of sectors that would have insights about community health and well-being to ensure organizational diversity across the community. We also asked original interviewees to recommend individuals to speak with in an effort to supplement important organizations or perspectives not included in the original sample.

A total of 18 unique respondents were interviewed during the spring and summer of 2018 for this report. All interviews (lasting 30–75 minutes each) were conducted using semi-structured interview guides tailored to the unique context and activities taking place in each community and to the role of the respondent in the community. Interviewers used probes to ensure that they obtained input on specific items of interest (for example, facilitators and barriers to improved population health, well-being, and equity) and open-ended questions to ensure that they fully addressed and captured participants' responses and perceptions about influences on health and well-being in their communities. Individuals who participated in a key informant interview are not identified by name or organization to protect confidentiality, but they are identified as a “respondent.” Information collected through environmental scans includes program and organizational information available on internet websites, publicly available documents, and media reports. Population surveillance and monitoring data were compiled from publicly available datasets, including the American Community Survey; Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System; and other similar federal, state, and local data sources.

We will conduct ongoing surveillance and monitoring activities in these communities through 2020 and report updated information on their progress, challenges, and lessons learned in improving health and well-being for all residents.

Data collection and monitoring thus far has revealed common themes among otherwise distinct communities. The next phase of this project will be cross-community reports that will examine common themes across subgroups of the 30 communities (for example, rural communities, communities experiencing large demographic shifts, and communities leveraging local data for decision-making). These reports also will be posted on rwjf.org/cultureofhealth.
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Introduction

In our Snapshot report for Tampa, Flor., we described a large metropolitan area surrounding Tampa Bay, a natural harbor connected to the Gulf of Mexico on the west coast of Florida. With the state’s largest deep-water port, an international airport, and a network of railroads and highways, Tampa is a center of regional trade and distribution. The city has a history of racial and economic segregation, with a large proportion of the city’s poor minority population once concentrated in unsafe public housing units and neighborhoods.\(^1\) Since 1998, Tampa has worked to significantly revitalize public housing and improve the built environment to increase support for healthy living.\(^2-^4\) In 2010, Tampa received a Sustainable Communities Challenge Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to develop a master plan and shared vision of downtown Tampa as a community of diverse, safe neighborhoods connected by walking and biking paths.\(^5,^6\)

Today, Tampa has one of the lowest levels of poverty segregation in Florida.\(^7\) Despite this success, a lack of transportation infrastructure outside of the downtown area remains a significant barrier to achieving health and well-being—with numerous multi-lane roads, few safe pedestrian crossings or bike paths, and no regional public transit system. Florida’s Department of Health in Hillsborough County and many organizations partnering to promote health and well-being of Tampa residents operate at a county level. Thus, this report includes
stakeholder insights from the broader county, given how county actions influence the Tampa experience.

In this report, we examine Tampa’s efforts to improve population health and build a healthier and more equitable community. We use the Culture of Health Action Framework to interpret and organize key findings. The Framework prioritizes four broad Action Areas: 1) Making Health a Shared Value; 2) Fostering Cross-Sector Collaboration to Improve Well-Being; 3) Creating Healthier, More Equitable Communities; and 4) Strengthening Integration of Health Services and Systems.

Within these areas, activities and investments can advance population health, well-being, and equity in diverse community contexts. Using the Framework, we describe how Tampa, and the surrounding Hillsborough County, is designing a healthier community and leveraging multisector collaborations to support the well-being of its residents.

**CONTEXTUAL CONDITIONS**

Tampa is the third largest city in Florida with a population of about 377,000 people. Tampa is the largest city within Hillsborough County, which has an estimated population of over 1.3 million people. Many individuals live outside the city proper or have recently been displaced outside the city limits, but are viewed by most as Tampa residents. As a private sector respondent noted, “The way the population has grown, it just bleeds over the city line. It matters to the city council and county commission, not to most other people.”

Tampa is a racially and ethnically diverse city. About 27 percent of the population is black, six percent is Asian, and about 68 percent white. About 24 percent of the population is Hispanic. Historically, minority populations have been disproportionately clustered in public housing in segregated and unsafe neighborhoods. However, a federal investigation in the late 1990s shed light on deplorable living conditions, which resulted in new federal laws mandating a shift to mixed-income housing developments. Neighborhood racial composition has changed quickly with the redevelopment of downtown, with black residents moving from low-income housing to majority white neighborhoods outside of the city center. Today, Tampa has one of the lowest levels of poverty segregation in Florida as a result of the city’s work in rebuilding and desegregating public housing and relocating public housing residents. Racial and ethnic segregation within Tampa has also steadily declined since 2000.

The city of Tampa is currently several years into a major redevelopment of its downtown and waterfront area. The city is rebuilding and extending the Riverwalk; creating bike lanes; building new parks; and developing empty land and lots. Additional redevelopment is ongoing with Water Street Tampa, a $3 billion, 50-acre development that includes a mixed-use neighborhood, new office space, and cultural, retail, and entertainment space. A cornerstone of this redevelopment is the establishment of the Morsani College of Medicine and Health, part of the University of South Florida (USF), which will be located in this area, away from the larger USF campus in another part of town. The majority of redevelopment efforts have been undertaken by wealthy individuals, and there is a heavy emphasis on the promotion of small business within these redeveloped areas to foster economic growth.

Transportation is considered a major barrier to achieving health and well-being in Tampa. In the absence of local or regional planning, rural highways evolved into busy multi-lane arterial roads, creating low-density commercial corridors lacking sidewalks or pedestrian protection. Hillsborough County has one of the highest traffic fatality rates per capita of all large counties in the United States. In addition, there is no regional transportation system, and poor infrastructure makes walking and biking dangerous. Collectively, these features result in a heavy reliance on cars for transportation. The lack of a regional transportation system is a barrier to accessing care and services and a hindrance to employment. Highways also cut through the city in multiple places, creating barriers to neighborhood cohesion. While the Tampa Chamber of Commerce has prioritized regional transportation as a major policy issue and is working to promote and identify funding sources for a cost-effective transportation system, Tampa has lacked state funding for public transportation. Some perceive that differing political priorities at the city, county and state level has led to a scarcity of state support for some Tampa projects.

Lack of funding from the state in the areas of access and coverage impacts Tampa as well. For example, Florida did not expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, and a state bill to expand Medicaid was vetoed by the governor. Tampa does, however, have the Hillsborough County Health Plan, developed in 1992 by County commissioners. This plan offers affordable medical and dental care for those who cannot afford traditional medical insurance and is funded by a county-wide sales tax. The plan provided coverage to more than 18,000 county residents in 2016; however, Tampa continues to face major barriers to health coverage and access. In 2016, 16.4 percent of individuals in Florida and 14.3 percent of residents in Tampa were uninsured, compared to 11.7 percent for the United States overall. A related challenge is that the county Department of Health is a branch of the Florida Department of Health, which means that policies and priorities related to health are set at the state, rather than local level.

**COMMUNITY CAPACITY TO PROMOTE HEALTH, EQUITY, AND WELL-BEING**

Tampa’s capacity to promote health, equity and well-being is strengthened by a number of key factors—including public and private investment in the redevelopment of the downtown waterfront area; local government commitment; and the involvement of a number of large institutions that offer a breadth and depth of expertise to the community.

Public and private investment in redeveloping downtown: As noted, the city’s work in rebuilding and desegregating public housing began in 1998. To jump-start these efforts, Tampa received two Hope VI grants from HUD, totaling $52.4 million and a $30 million Choice Neighborhoods grant, also from HUD—to create less dense, mixed-income, and mixed-use housing. In 2010, Tampa received a $1.2 million Sustainable Communities Challenge Grant from HUD to develop a downtown master plan and primary transit corridor.
Downtown Tampa's revitalization got a further boost with the 2017 announcement of the Water Street Tampa, noted earlier. The development is backed by NHL team owner Jeffrey Vinik and the Bill Gates' Cascade fund. The relocation of USF's Morsani School of Medicine and Health received a $20 million gift from Frank Morsani, a successful Tampa auto dealer and leading area philanthropist, in 2011. Supporters hope the school will become an anchor in emerging technology, and is scheduled to open in its new location in 2019.

Aside from individual grants and gifts, the Tampa Chamber of Commerce, a not-for-profit business membership organization, was formed to address the general business conditions of the Tampa region. Their 2018 legislative agenda includes advocating for workforce development and business and economic development at the state and local level, including advocating for business development in the downtown waterfront area specifically. For example, the Chamber supports USF's funding for the Morsani College of Medicine & Heart Institute in Water Street Tampa and policies that proactively address affordable housing to maintain and recruit the workforce needed for a strong economy.

**Local government commitment and anchor institutions' expertise contribute to well-being.** The redevelopment of Center City, Tampa's urban core, began in 2011 following election of Tampa Mayor Bob Buckhorn. With a combination of federal and city funding, Buckhorn proposed a multiyear plan, known as InVision Tampa, to elevate Tampa's waterfront as a focus of redevelopment to promote the area's livability, sustainability and economic vitality. Residents were actively engaged in this process, helping to inform redevelopment efforts and establishing priorities for redevelopment areas. In addition to his emphasis on redevelopment, Buckhorn has taken steps to address issues of equity within the city and has launched a new initiative called Autism Friendly Tampa. Since April, the city has worked closely with the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) to train employees; review parks and other city facilities for sensory-friendly improvements; and distribute "distact packs" to 15 parks and recreation locations. "In my time as mayor, I have made it a point to ensure that Tampa is open to everyone."23

Apart from support from the mayor's office, other governmental agencies are working to promote health and well-being in Tampa and the surrounding area. The Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), for example, is a transportation policymaking board responsible for making sure that federal and state dollars are based on a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process. MPO is responsible for establishing priorities in Tampa, neighboring cities, and unincorporated Hillsborough County. MPO introduced Vision Zero, a data-driven plan to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries. A Vision Zero goal resolution has been adopted by the Tampa City Council, Hillsborough County Commission, and School Board of Hillsborough County. Pioneered in Sweden, the initiative focuses on factors that shape the region's transportation system, including engineering, education, enforcement, equity and evaluation. A planning sector respondent observed, "When you look at Vision Zero movements in other parts of the country, they do more than just the infrastructure. They also talk about changes in your law enforcement approach. So, we're doing a lot of work with law enforcement, which is taking a data-driven approach to how they allocate their resources."

The greater Tampa region has a number of large, anchor institutions that offer a breadth and depth of expertise to promote the health, equity and well-being of Tampa's residents. These institutions are tied into the community through their diverse partnerships, linking them to hundreds of local businesses, organizations, coalitions, advocacy groups and community organizations. Two institutions—USF and United Way—are noted here.

USF is classified by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in the top tier of research universities and is committed to addressing the health and needs of the surrounding community. USF also has made a strong commitment to working with small business and nonprofits on shared research to improve the economic outlook for families and the community with respect to job development. For example, USF is working with small businesses to find ways to reduce the carbon footprint of small business, without negatively impacting profit or jobs. USF has about 500 community partners, 150 that they work with on a regular basis. In addition, USF leadership and staff sit on about 50 local boards. Collectively, USF is committed to working with the community to coordinate services; identify community needs; and help fill those needs through research, as well as student involvement. The relocation of the USF medical school into downtown Tampa puts it in closer proximity to Tampa General Hospital and USF's Center for Advanced Medical Learning and Simulation, further strengthening the ties of USF to the community.

The United Way is working to improve lives and create better opportunities for all by breaking the cycle of generational poverty. For example, it operates and invests in local programs serving more than 100,000 children and youth to promote early literacy and help ensure that children graduate high school with the skills necessary to pursue postsecondary education or vocational training. Another United Way's core program areas is around financial stability, helping...
Developing a Culture of Health

Efforts within Tampa point to a concerted effort to address key barriers and issues that pose risks to resident health and well-being, including a lack of safe, affordable housing; displacement of residents due to downtown redevelopment; and a lack of accessible public transit infrastructure. Stakeholders within Tampa have responded to these primary concerns through promoting livability, sustainability and economic vitality of Downtown Tampa; developing multisector partnerships to support the diverse needs of the community; and creatively addressing the city’s most significant barrier to health and well-being—the lack of a safe, comprehensive, and accessible public transit system. Through these efforts, Tampa provides examples of how to Foster Cross-Sector Collaboration to Improve Well-Being and Create Healthier, More Equitable Communities.

DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT BRINGS IMPROVEMENTS, BUT ALSO RESIDENT DISPLACEMENT

With a new Riverwalk adjacent to the Hillsborough River, refurbished parks, streetscapes, and bike trails, Tampa’s Center City has come a long way in a relatively short time frame. For several decades, downtown Tampa suffered from poor urban planning that resulted in neighborhoods dissected by new highways, a neglected riverfront, and disinvestment in neighborhood commercial areas. The Center City’s development began in 2011 and by 2017, the majority of the plan’s major goals had been completed, including construction of a new hotel, new commercial spaces, and thousand units of student and residential housing.

The Water Street Tampa development, currently under development, will add 12 acres of new and enhanced parks and aims to be a WELL-certified district, which prioritizes design to enhance health and well-being through space and design. The WELL community standards cover 110 evidence-based features across 10 concepts that promote health and wellness within a building: air, water, nourishment, light, fitness, temperature, sound, materials, mind, and community. Features range from the availability of employee assistance programs offering short-term treatment and referrals for mental and behavioral health concerns—to air and water quality—to the use of plants and other living materials in the space.

“WE’RE A VERY DIVERSE COMMUNITY, BUT WHEN IT COMES TO THE ECONOMY, WE ARE NOT DIVERSE AND THERE’S A LOT OF WORK THAT NEEDS TO [BE] DONE.”

GOVERNMENT SECTOR RESPONDENT

Although this redevelopment effort has generated a significant number of jobs in downtown Tampa, concerns have been raised around inequities in the number of trade jobs and subcontracts that have been and are being offered to minorities and minority-led businesses. While bigger businesses say they are unable to find minority-led subcontractors with whom to partner, owners of minority-led businesses feel that they lack opportunities to prove themselves as reliable subcontractors. In response to this concern, the County Commissioner’s office started a minority business accelerator program in 2018 to mentor companies for two years and track them for three years after that. One government respondent noted, “We’re a very diverse community, but when it comes to the economy, we are not diverse and there’s a lot of work that needs to [be] done.”

“[PEOPLE] HAVE MOVED OUT TO PLACES WHERE IT’S EVEN MORE DIFFICULT FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES, AND FOR PEOPLE TO ACCESS AND CONNECT INTO THE MAINSTREAM SYSTEM.”

PLANNING SECTOR RESPONDENT

As part of the redevelopment effort of the downtown area, many public housing buildings in disrepair were torn down and are being replaced with new, mixed-use housing that includes a similar or increased number of affordable housing units. As noted above, this has resulted in Tampa having one of the lowest levels of poverty segregation, and significantly improved living conditions for those in
affordable housing. This work has earned the city accolades by the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission for community design and a best practice award for a comprehensive modernization program from the Florida Association of Housing and Redevelopment.\(^9\) Such change is viewed positively from stakeholders who feel that it may improve the safety of the community. A respondent working in public safety explained, “They have demolished a few of the older complexes that were known for being crime ridden. They’re replacing them with more modern structures and going to more of a mixed-income stance with public housing. I think when residents come out there, and they see, ‘Wow, we have a community garden, and a pool,’ then that creates buy-in from those residents. They want to work to make sure that their community is safe.”

However, not all stakeholders agree with the assertion that the entire community is benefitting from these changes, raising concerns about the impact of Tampa’s urban renaissance on low-income residents. The demolition of existing public housing required to build new housing has resulted in the relocation of former Tampa residents to areas outside the city that lack services, jobs, and sense of community, because those were the only areas displaced residents could afford. A respondent working in the planning sector noted that “[People] have moved out to places where it’s even more difficult for government services, and for people to access and connect into the mainstream system.” There is also concern that few people, who are relocated out of public housing, ever get back into the new mixed-income housing. Some would argue that even with redevelopment, there remains a lack of affordable housing downtown, primarily because it is not income-generating for developers. “We really do have a housing scarcity. Developers don’t want to build low-income housing. They want to build luxury housing because that’s where the money is.” There are also rules for which displaced individuals are eligible to return. The rules state that anyone is eligible to return as long as they meet their lease requirements, have not been arrested, or filed for bankruptcy. The Tampa Housing Authority (THA) reports that approximately 12 to 15 percent of displaced individuals return. While some feel this low return rate is a signal of the cost and rule barriers previously mentioned, THA views the low return rate as a signal that residents are happier in their new locations, where they may have played a bigger role in selecting where they lived. The impact of displacement related to redevelopment for low-income residents is mixed; some individuals are put in a state of heightened disadvantage, while others benefit from the opportunity to move to, or return to, significantly improved housing.

The University Area is a region of incredible blight, health disparities, and disadvantage that surrounds the University of South Florida. It has been known as “Suitcase City” due to its high levels of transience, crime rates, and poor health indicators. Of note, this area does not reside within the city of Tampa and is unincorporated in Hillsborough County. A community development respondent described the context like this, “If you look on a map, you can see where they drew the line, literally, around this community because no one wanted it. No one wanted to have those stats included in their city or their county or whatnot.” Aided by federal funding, a nonprofit Community Development Corporation (CDC) was formed in the late 1990s to address the needs of the University Area and create positive change\(^8\) through the delivery of a range of centrally located services.

**COLLABORATIONS SUPPORT PLACE-BASED PROGRAMMING IN UNIVERSITY AREA**

Both traditional and nontraditional collaborations have formed to support the health and well-being of community residents within Tampa and the surrounding areas. The geographic reach, population served, and purpose of these collaborations vary, but all provide examples of the ways in which stakeholders from diverse sectors are working together to improve health and well-being within Tampa.

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\(^9\) Federal funding

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also face. “We have to make sure we’re locking arms with the partners and providers in the community and most importantly, the residents, because we’re not going to do this work for them, we’re going to do it with them. That’s key and crucial to the community development piece.”

Part of CDC’s success in engaging partners is that it has been able to frame the asks from a business perspective. Rather than going in as a nonprofit and pleading for money and help, CDC has been able to answer the “what’s in it for me” question and show, using data, what a potential partner’s rate of return would be if they become a partner and invest in CDC programming. A community development respondent noted, “The partnerships have to be mutually beneficial to last.” Through this effort the CDC has been able to attract a community clinic to the area and recently received a 25-year commitment to turn their local elementary school into a community model school, which means that they now have an entire wing of the school for parents to receive services, including English as a second language, GED, and parenting classes. The school is also implementing a food pantry on site and the new community clinic will also be housed at the school.

"WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE WE'RE LOCKING ARMS WITH THE PARTNERS AND PROVIDERS IN THE COMMUNITY AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE RESIDENTS, BECAUSE WE'RE NOT GOING TO DO THIS WORK FOR THEM, WE'RE GOING TO DO IT WITH THEM."

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SECTOR RESPONDENT

In addition to their efforts with the school and health clinic, the CDC has worked to create positive change in housing and to build a social fabric in the community. The CDC operates and manages two apartment complexes, which allows it to know the residents and help connect them to services, and it is starting to build single- and multi-family affordable housing units as well. In addition, it has made a lot of progress in cleaning up the local park, which has resulted in drug dealers leaving the area. The CDC hosts a monthly block party with the goal of creating social bonds and connections among neighbors. Given the massive scope of the revitalization, the CDC is purchasing land for affordable housing one block at a time. “Every time we purchase land we put up a huge sign that says: Harvest Hope Properties, growing our communities one block at a time. Then we put a tiny library next to it. It’s just kind of like a bookstand but it looks like a little house. We put in books for adults and for children, so then you start to see we’re promoting literacy and it’s just, again, getting the community activated. Then we start doing murals and art.”

MULTIPLE SECTORS WORK TOGETHER FOR POLICY CHANGE TO CREATE HEALTHIER PLACES

Within Tampa, there are a number of collaborations and partnerships working for policy changes to create healthier places and spaces. One example is the Tobacco Cessation Coalition, which has partnered with multi-unit housing owners to create tobacco-free housing and collaborated with worksite wellness programs to implement tobacco-free campus policies. The coalition cited its partnership with the Department of Health as providing a lot of technical assistance and support in the implementation of smoke-free policies within the city of Tampa and Hillsborough County. The Anti-Drug Alliance also provided the coalition not only with space to meet, but with the infrastructure to help run the coalition efficiently. An academic sector respondent explained the coalition’s ability to have an impact: “It’s not just a small group of people making decisions, crossing their fingers that something will happen … it’s people who are willing to take the next step and bring other people to the table or go out there themselves and make the change.”

“IT’S ONE OF THE FIRST OF ITS KIND … WHERE IN ORDER TO REALLY SEE A REDUCTION IN VIOLENCE, YOU HAVE TO EFFECT POLICY CHANGE, AND THE WAY THAT YOU EFFECT POLICY CHANGE IS TO GET THE STAKEHOLDERS TO THE TABLE THAT HAVE THE ABILITY TO EFFECT CHANGE.”

NONPROFIT SECTOR RESPONDENT

Safe and Sound Hillsborough is another example of an initiative bringing diverse partners together to address the health and well-being needs of the community through policy. Safe and Sound is a community violence prevention collaborative created to transform the way local policymakers address violence. This initiative shifts policy from a public safety to a public health model and aligns community and professional stakeholders to develop a comprehensive prevention and intervention approach. Its work centers around understanding and addressing violence through the lens of high unemployment rates, recognizing that employment challenges often drive participation in illegal activity. The initiative creates opportunities for the re-entry population with respect to workforce development; mental health and substance use intercepts; mentorship; and mental health and well-being of families. There are also infrastructure supports for a safe environment, including the physical buildings and safe spaces. When addressed comprehensively, the goal of Safe and Sound is to help people feel safer in their communities—which will then result in people spending time outside and interacting with other service providers, including law enforcement, first responders, and community resource agencies.

A unique aspect of Safe and Sound lies in its leadership council, which successfully engaged law enforcement; public defender’s office; state attorney’s office; school district; sheriff’s office; administrative office of the courts; and the local children’s board. Safe and Sound was able to work with them to sign an inter-local agreement, which said there will be data-sharing among their agencies, and the agencies would contribute resources and time to come together to work on equitable policies. A nonprofit respondent notes, “It’s one of the first of its kind … where in order to really see a reduction in violence, you have to effect policy change, and the way that you effect policy change is to get the stakeholders to the table that have the ability to effect change.” An example of their collective impact was the recommendation that all new employers or businesses looking to move into a region register their jobs...
or their employment opportunities within the network of Safe and Sound. The goal of this registry is to help connect underemployed individuals in those areas with better jobs, providing them with a stronger sense of purpose, allowing parents the opportunity to work fewer jobs or have jobs closer to home, which will, in turn, allow them to spend more quality time with their children. The council has also expedited pilot programs related to violence reduction by relying on partners to remove bureaucratic barriers at their organizations and has collectively developed policies related to in-school suspensions and movement toward civil citations rather than arrests. A nonprofit respondent explains, “It takes all of those individual agencies to come together to say ‘yes, we will play nice in the sandbox’. That’s the major success.”

DEVELOPING SHARED PRIORITIES RELATED TO PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Compared to the development of cross-sector partnerships described in the prior sections, collaboration to address the physical, mental and behavioral health of Tampa residents has been slower to develop. Florida’s Department of Health in Hillsborough County, the city’s health providers, and community partners have traditionally operated with separate agendas and little sense of a shared commitment to improving community health. Contributing to this siloed approach are the complexities around jurisdictional or geographic boundaries, which do not align despite similarities in population and health-related needs. The net result, in some cases, has been a duplication of effort and an inefficient use of time and resources. A mental health respondent notes, “I think we could do better with those kinds of things because I have to go to both of them. Why are we not meeting together to get the common good put forward? The common good does come out of both the meetings, it’s just labor intensive.”

"YOU [NEED THAT] KIND OF CENTRALIZED LEADERSHIP IN BRINGING US ALL TOGETHER AND SAYING, ‘OKAY, TRY AND LEAVE YOUR INDIVIDUAL AGENDAS AT THE DOOR, AND COME IN AND WORK COLLECTIVELY.’ I THINK THAT WAS A CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR."  

HEALTH CARE SECTOR RESPONDENT

The Tampa Bay Healthcare Collaborative (TBHC) is a longstanding example of collaboration across health and wellness professionals, but is focused more on professional development. TBHC was developed 15 years ago with the goal of bringing service providers together who work with underserved populations—so that they can more effectively coordinate services and existing resources and build provider capacity around three areas: advocacy, health equity and wellness. The TBHC does not provide direct services, but specializes in connecting providers, sharing information and resources, and providing networking opportunities. They also on occasion provide small stipends to organizations looking to address gaps in service or coordination. The TBHC hosts an annual health and wellness conference that convenes wellness professionals from the private sector as well as nonprofit community educators, and public health professionals to network and learn from each other.

Although evidence for the impact of the Collaborative on patient outcomes is unclear, TBHC’s 2017 annual report noted that 97 percent of partner organization surveys thought that the TBHC provided them with increased understanding of health equity and culturally and linguistically competent care and 94 percent felt that the TBHC provided them with a greater understanding and awareness of public policies and advocacy opportunities to affect health and health care in Tampa.

These examples primarily involve Tampa’s health and health care institutions. There are also examples of other partnerships focused on supporting the unique needs of those with addiction—which include more nontraditional partners such as law enforcement and justice department. For example, the Opioid Drug Court Pilot Program, is designed to support individuals with opioid addiction who have a legal encounter. Modeled after other opioid drug courts, this program...
is a unique partnership between DACCO Behavioral Health and the justice system, supported by other community and social services. Rather than legal sentencing, eligible individuals receive individualized treatment planning; medication-assisted treatment; individual and group counseling; and a host of other services. The pilot program, which took place between 2016 and 2017, yielded a savings of over $57,000 across the 40 program participants.33

Prioritizing Transportation Challenges for Safety and Well-Being

Outside of the downtown Tampa area, insufficient transportation infrastructure was cited by almost all respondents as a major barrier to economic growth, competitiveness, access to health care and overall well-being. The lack of an effective bus transit system further highlighted the city’s infrastructure shortcomings. For residents opting to walk or bike across Tampa’s multi-lane highways—right turn lanes, and fast-moving traffic pose ever-present dangers. Hillsborough County had the highest number of pedestrian and cyclist deaths (62 deaths in total) in the state in both 2016 and 2017.34 A planning sector respondent described, “We have a lot of major roads that have very limited facility for walking or bicycling and they have little or no bus service. And you have a lot of people who are trying to get around the way they would in any other metropolitan area that has 1.3 million people. We are just not set up for that.”

“A Patient Has to Take Three or Four Transfers of a Bus to Get from Their Area of Town to Our Health Clinic That Might Only Be a Few Miles Away From Them.”

Health Care Sector Respondent

According to all respondents interviewed for this report, Tampa’s poor transportation infrastructure creates major barriers to people seeking health services and employment. For example, more than half of respondents (58%) to a survey on transportation access in two Tampa neighborhoods said their local medical clinic is not safely walkable from their home.35 A health care sector respondent described, “A patient has to take three or four transfers of a bus to get from their area of town to our health clinic that might only be a few miles away from them.” Travel to jobs by bus transit frequently involves more than one route, creating lengthy commuting times and a recent study by the nonpartisan Eno Center for Transportation ranked the Tampa Bay area 77th of 100 in the United States in terms of access to jobs by transit.36 A nonprofit respondent noted the barrier this presents, “We are trying to work with folks that are in low-paying jobs and try to get them the training and education, and they achieve that, but then they don’t have a car; there’s just no reliable transportation for them to get to and from work.”

Consensus is emerging that Tampa’s economic prosperity, health, and well-being are inextricably tied to improving the area’s transportation infrastructure and the related built environment. Yet significant barriers impede implementation of proposed solutions. Tax increases for funding transit development remain unpopular at the state and local levels—and there is a lack of alignment around the goals and priorities of elected officials at the city, county and state level. One respondent familiar with this debate noted, “There are some that will say if rail is part of the discussion in any way, shape or form, they will not support it. They will do whatever they can to stonewall it, stop it or kill it. But then you have some that will say, if rail is not part of the discussion in some way, I will do whatever I can to stop it, delay it, or kill it. Those are extreme views.”

Despite the seemingly insurmountable political challenges, dialogue around transportation as an influencer of health and well-being is becoming more common. A respondent working in planning described the way the connection is being made “The public health sector has started the conversation about, ‘What is health?’ And it’s not about going to the doctor. So, safety is a public health issue, and I’m so glad to see the conversation they’re having about ‘what is our culture? What are our values?’ I think that just a few years ago, we were more collaborative as a community, as a nation—talking about, ‘How does health intersect with transportation? How does transportation intersect with how we build? How does that affect our economy? Who should be at the table? Who’s missing?’”

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Planning Sector Respondent

Local organizations are also working to identify short- and long-term approaches and solutions to the transportation challenges. As one example, the Tampa Chamber of Commerce37 is working to promote and identify funding sources for a cost-effective transportation system that will support economic development and improve quality of life. For example, some of the Chamber’s priorities include advocating for emerging technologies and innovative financing, including public-private partnerships, to build a regional system; supporting transportation policies and projects that are paired with modernized land use regulations to create a density of commercial and residential growth in an established corridor; and advocating for premium transit that is widely available and promotes effective and efficient commuting to improve business prosperity and quality of life for Tampa’s residents.37

Some organizations have addressed the transportation barrier in other ways, including providing transportation themselves and bundling services in a single location to minimize commute time and maximize the number of services that can be received once an individual has traveled to the location. For example, the BayCare Medical Group recently received an innovation award from Florida Blue, part of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, to test a partnership with Uber. While the impact of this program is not yet known, this program would provide
Uber transportation to patients, who are most at risk for needing follow-up care, but who cannot easily get to the clinic. The Police Athletic League program, which has started a boxing program for youth, also provides transportation to and from the program. “We pick the kids up and transport the kids to the gym so their parents don’t have to worry about transportation.” Using a different approach to overcome the transportation barrier, the United Way has co-located services—like support for obtaining a GED; job training and coaching; financial assistance and development of individual financial accounts in financial stability centers—located in several low-income neighborhoods.

SUMMARY OF TAMPA’S EFFORTS TO BUILD A CULTURE OF HEALTH
Based on the Culture of Health Action Framework that we used to guide Sentinel Community data collection and monitoring in Tampa, the city has made progress in building a Culture of Health by developing ambitious strategic plans to address some of the community’s longstanding infrastructure challenges. These plans have had spillover benefits to health, well-being, and public safety, and multisector partners are beginning to articulate their role in improving health in Tampa.

For example, Tampa has made a commitment to Creating Healthier, More Equitable Communities, through its focus on development and reduction in residential segregation issues, as well as interest in increasing the stock of affordable housing. Further, Tampa’s concerns about transportation infrastructure represent an interest in opening up access to city services, including health and social programs. In the area of Strengthening Integration of Health Services and Systems, Tampa has been working diligently to bring together health professionals by linking the work of the Department of Health with the efforts of the major hospitals and other health centers to support joint health activities. This and other efforts, such as the work of the University Area CDC, Safe and Sound, and Vision Zero, represent dedication to enhancing Cross-Sector Collaboration to Improve Well-Being in some areas. Though some of these collaborations represent strong multisector partnerships, the process of Making Health a Shared Value is still in development. Health issues, such as traffic fatalities, are receiving broad-based attention—though initiatives that tackles health and well-being more broadly are receiving less attention across sectors in Tampa.

Emerging Community Themes

There is growing commitment to development and urban design that promotes health and well-being, with a keen interest in transportation that improves access to community services and amenities. Redevelopment efforts in Tampa have significantly improved the quality of life for many of its low-income residents. However, some stakeholders in Tampa note it is also important to consider the challenges that such displacement can bring for those who have been moved from their homes. Also, some communities can become overwhelmed by a sudden influx of residents who need services and support, where such services may not exist.

While transforming the transportation system in Tampa to address critical barriers to accessing jobs, health care, and services is seen as a shared goal of diverse stakeholders in the community, political barriers to investments in multimodal transit are perceived as significant. In the meantime, service providers have pursued creative strategies to offer centralized resources located in convenient neighborhood settings.

There are a few multisector partnerships to support health as well, such as Healthy Hillsborough, supported by joint community health assessment efforts. Many of these partnerships have not yet had the influence that those directed toward infrastructure improvements have and tracking their progress over time will be critical to understanding how processes to secure community health and well-being are changing in Tampa. Those that have been successful, such as Safe and Sound Hillsborough, have done so by adopting a public health model that aligns community and professional stakeholders, facilitated by data-sharing agreements. In general, Tampa is home to a number of innovative models for building a healthy community, though critical community priorities remain unaddressed in the face of rapid population growth.
What’s Next

In recent years, Tampa has undertaken some highly acclaimed redevelopment activities, which addressed longstanding challenges of residential segregation and economic decline in some of Tampa’s neighborhoods. Natural amenities have been reclaimed for public benefit, new anchor institutions are taking root, and diverse stakeholders are playing a role in the process. What remains to be seen is the impact of redevelopment activities on long-term resident displacement, and whether new businesses, jobs, and educational opportunities in these areas yield benefits for all in the city.

Health institutions in and around Tampa came together to form Healthy Hillsborough, a county-level partnership. Led by the Department of Health, the partnership conducted a needs assessment and identified four priority areas for collaborative action. While some progress had been made on at least one of the priority areas, it is not clear whether the partnership will be sustained long term and whether collaborative solutions will be developed, implemented, and effective at addressing their identified priority areas.

Stakeholders in Tampa are becoming increasingly vocal about the impact of poor transportation options on city and county residents, including establishing Vision Zero to reduce traffic fatalities. A few respondents indicated that a potential shift in state government control may reduce the roadblocks that have prevented action in this arena in the past. Monitoring these changes will be critical to understanding how Tampa was (or was not) able to have success making change on an issue that appears to be a shared priority.
References