RWJF Culture of Health
Community Portrait

White Plains, New York
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 White Plains, N.Y., 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 White Plains, 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 22 unique respondents were interviewed during spring and summer 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 will also be posted on rwjf.org/cultureofhealth.
Introduction

In our Snapshot of White Plains, N.Y., we describe a culturally diverse, mid-Atlantic city located approximately 25 miles from New York City. Over the past 50 years, White Plains has undergone several urban renewal efforts to increase commercial activity and attract new residents to the city. Despite being a relatively wealthy community, there is a deep economic divide between the more affluent, mainly white population and the lower-income minority and immigrant communities. However, a geographically compact downtown and a range of sectors with overlapping service-area boundaries facilitate strong collaboration and shared agendas to support the city’s more vulnerable residents. White Plains has prioritized services and opportunities for children and youth. For instance, the city offers a diverse range of supports and services for immigrant and minority populations, and has strategically located workforce training opportunities and other amenities within recently renovated public housing complexes. In this report, we examine White Plains’ efforts to improve population health and build a healthier and more equitable community using 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 White Plains’ organizations, partnerships, and services continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of its community.

CONTEXTUAL CONDITIONS
Since the early 20th century, White Plains has been an important hub for legal and banking activities in Westchester County. New York. Between 1966 and 1980, 130 acres of land were redeveloped into a modern central business district in downtown White Plains, and in 2003, another $650 million in new development was initiated, producing a downtown that now includes a variety of shopping and dining options, as well as luxury hotels.3–5 Given its close proximity to over 65 million U.S. and Canadian customers,6 many food and beverage businesses are headquartered here. These include regional and international corporations such as Heineken USA,7 Sabra Dipping Company,8 and Dannon.9 PepsiCo is headquartered in Purchase, N.Y., approximately four miles away from the city center of White Plains.10

“IT’S [PEDESTRIAN/BICYCLE ACCESS TO TRAIN STATION] SOMETHING THAT WE’RE WORKING ON BECAUSE WE THINK IT’S AN OPPORTUNITY FOR HEALTH IN A LOT OF WAYS. IT HELPS WITH THE AIR QUALITY AND IT HELPS WITH PEOPLE’S PERSONAL HEALTH.”

MUNICIPAL SECTOR RESPONDENT

Although its roughly 59,000 residents make up only 6 percent of Westchester County’s population, White Plains’ population nearly quadruples during weekdays with commuters coming into the city for work.49 As a respondent from a neighborhood association noted, “We’re a busy city because we have a lot of people who work here or visit here during the day. We’re not just a bedroom community.” White Plains has recently worked to attract young professionals to the city as full-time residents with new amenity-filled apartment complexes and urban enhancements such as protected bike lanes and electric car charging stations.8 White Plains is also working to improve pedestrian and bicycle access to the town’s train station. As a city representative noted, “It’s something that we’re working on because we think it’s an opportunity for health in a lot of ways. It helps with the air quality and it helps with people’s personal health.” The city has also worked to reduce air pollution by banning fuel oil numbers four and six, both heavy fuel oils, and requiring ultra-low sulfur fuel for all construction equipment.

In addition to being home to many businesses, many of the region’s health and social service systems, including homeless services, are located in White Plains, which draws people with higher need into the city. This creates a tension among residents: While some view the city’s ability to take care of some of the larger health issues of the region as a source of pride for their hometown, others are concerned about the safety and well-being of their neighborhoods as a result of the daily influx of high-need individuals. As one nonprofit leader noted, “We have a lot of homeless services out of White Plains, social services, probation-type offices. A lot of people with a lot of different issues end up in White Plains, either living here or coming here for the day. Homeless people get dropped off here from different shelters, and we have to deal with that, too. It’s a problem, but it’s not a problem … I see the city of White Plains residents as taking pride in how we handle it all.” White Plains is a diverse community; about 44 percent of residents are white, 12 percent black, 7 percent Asian, and 33 percent Hispanic or Latino. In addition, 33 percent of the population is foreign-born, many of whom are recent immigrants. Many residents experience cultural or language barriers, making it difficult to gain access to needed services. Among immigrant populations, there are concerns that some are not able to work to their full professional potential because many degrees, professional certifications or licenses obtained in their home country are not transferable. Language barriers also can impede obtaining equivalent certification in the United States.

White Plains is located within Westchester County, an affluent region with the second highest per capita income of any county in New York. Yet within the county, and within White Plains in particular, there is a deep divide between the affluent white population and the growing black and immigrant population. The per capita annual income for white, non-Hispanic residents was over $71,000 in 2016, compared to just under $31,000 for black residents and about $20,000 for Hispanic residents.11 About 9 percent of the community lives in poverty and another 27 percent are considered asset-limited, income-constrained, but employed (ALICE), indicating that they struggle to meet basic needs.12 As one respondent from the nonprofit sector noted, “It’s a mixed community. If you go to the high school, it’s about one-third white, about one-third Hispanic, and one-third black. And that’s our reflection of the community. But economically, it’s not the same. The white population, by and large, is clearly more affluent than the Hispanic and black population, with some exceptions, but in general.”

“WE HAVE A LOT OF HOMELESS SERVICES OUT OF WHITE PLAINS, SOCIAL SERVICES, PROBATION-TYPE OFFICES. … HOMELESS PEOPLE GET DROPPED OFF HERE FROM DIFFERENT SHELTERS. … I SEE THE CITY OF WHITE PLAINS RESIDENTS AS TAKING PRIDE IN HOW WE HANDLE IT ALL.”

NONPROFIT SECTOR RESPONDENT

Given this economic divide, it is perhaps not surprising that the lack of affordable housing is cited as one of the most persistent health-related challenges for White Plains. The proximity to New York City and the presence of large corporations in downtown White Plains have driven up the price of real estate. This has made it difficult for lower-skilled individuals and those working in service industries in the city to afford to live there. While public housing units are abundant relative to other towns in Westchester County, and the city has been working to upgrade and expand public housing with new mixed-use and mixed-income properties, the supply is still far below what is needed.
Significant health disparities also exist among residents of White Plains. Average age at death for White Plains residents is 77 years, but is lower for black (73 years) and Hispanic (61 years) residents than for white (79 years) residents. Reducing death before age 65 from heart disease among black and Hispanic residents has been identified by the Westchester County Department of Health as a key countywide public health priority. Similarly, about 82 percent of black and 78 percent of Hispanic residents report good or excellent health status, compared to about 89 percent of white residents. Black residents also have poorer mental health, with about 15 percent reporting that their mental health was not good for more than 14 days in the past month, compared to about 8 percent for white and Hispanic residents.

**Community Capacity to Promote Health, Equity, and Well-being**

White Plain’s community capacity to promote health, equity, and well-being is grounded in the efforts of the city to support their most vulnerable residents, mainly children and youth, immigrant populations, and those who are struggling economically. Stakeholders in the city take pride in their ability to work together and to provide comprehensive services to those in need. This work is facilitated by close geographic proximity and shared service areas of government offices, health care institutions, and social services, many of which are located within a few blocks of each other. Several large organizations working to support low-income or minority populations receive at least some of their funding from the city, and others have jointly applied for and received large grants, such as through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This capacity has further facilitated the community’s alignment and ability to collectively address the needs of city residents.

**Collaborative network to nurture children and youth.**

Over the past several decades, city departments that serve White Plains youth have created a hub for a growing collaborative ecosystem to which many other sectors, services and residents can connect. As a city office, the Youth Bureau boasts 18 full-time and over 2,000 part-time staff, serving approximately 7,000 children each year through a diverse mix of programming—including mentoring, career development, and after-school activities, as well as an Institute for Health and Wellness to address risk factors of substance abuse and the promotion of healthy behaviors. Although the Bureau is open to children of all backgrounds, it has become a foundation of support for lower-income families, and a primary means for the city to connect with the growing immigrant population of White Plains. As one nonprofit leader noted, “The Youth Bureau is incredibly connected to everybody in the community—organizations, people, religious organizations, everything.” White Plains has received national recognition for their work with children and youth.

The Thomas H. Slater Center is another key institution within the city of White Plains and is home to a number of social service agencies, including a Head Start program run by Family Services of Westchester and after-school programs run by the Youth Bureau. While the city provides about 75 percent of their funding, services are complementary, not duplicative, to those provided by the Youth Bureau. Both the Slater Center and Youth Bureau focus on programming that provides recreation, learning, and other programming for children. They also partner with several other services and sectors, including White Plains school district, judicial system, food suppliers, health care, immigrant services, and private sector workforce development.

**Infrastructure to support minority and immigrant populations.**

White Plains offers abundant infrastructure for assisting minority populations, and a history of collaboration between sectors in support of minority residents to address a wide range of needs. City funding supports some of these agencies, including the above-mentioned Thomas H. Slater Center, which was created to provide services to residents of 450 public housing units with a focus on children. The Haitian Resource Center, launched in 2013, is an outgrowth of the Slater Center with a heavy reliance on the faith-based community for outreach. The Westchester Hispanic Coalition serves all Hispanic residents, although the majority of their clients are undocumented. They provide immigration legal services, domestic violence and sexual assault programming, and work with education and faith-based organizations for outreach. El Centro Hispanico also offers a wide array of supports for the Hispanic community, including language assistance, English language classes, and support for children’s groups.

Support for minority, immigrant, and other disadvantaged populations extends into the health sector. White Plains Memorial Hospital, for example, is an anchor institution that has a sizeable network, including a family health center, which largely serves the immigrant population. A number of federally qualified health centers, including Open Door Medical Centers and Greenburgh Health, operate multiple locations and serve as safety-net providers, accepting referrals from the Westchester Hispanic Coalition to care for many uninsured and undocumented residents.

**Organizations go beyond meeting basic needs of individuals.**

With a concentration of residents living under financial strain, White Plains depends on local organizations to provide food and shelter to its most vulnerable residents, mainly children and youth, immigrant populations, and those who are struggling economically.
Developing a Culture of Health

Efforts to improve the health and well-being of the residents of White Plains have benefited from a rich understanding among city leaders and stakeholders across sectors of key drivers of health and well-being. Some determinants of health in the city include economic opportunity; safe and healthy spaces; and opportunities for support and connection with other residents. Prioritizing services for the city’s more vulnerable populations, White Plains offers numerous examples of how approaches to addressing health and well-being can include comprehensive solutions that also build social capital and promote social justice. White Plains also offers successful models of cross-sector collaborations and partnered solutions to addressing priority health concerns of the community, spearheaded by the city or other anchor institutions.

As noted earlier, the White Plains Youth Bureau is an anchor for the city’s efforts, partnering with an assortment of organizations to offer a wide array of activities and experiences for children to help them find their unique talents and passions. A city official shared, “We try and get every kind of activity we can in front of young people ... because we feel that if a young person finds a talent in some area, it benefits them in every part of their life. We have no gang issues in the city. The main reason in my view is not about cops. It’s about engaging young people in productive activities that give them hope, give them something to be proud of, give them something to lose.”

When faced with increasing numbers of youth becoming involved in the justice system for misdemeanor crimes, the Bureau worked collaboratively through the White Plains Cares Coalition, judicial system, and department of public safety to develop Youth Court, a community-based juvenile justice initiative. Two other organizations, My Brother’s Keeper and Active Girls, also partner with the Youth Bureau and work on recidivism issues and keeping youth out of the judicial system. Collectively, organizations in White Plains work to support children and youth at each stage of development, providing many opportunities for them to understand the connection between learning, physical activity and health.

COMMUNITY HEALTH INITIATIVES INTEGRATE FAMILY SERVICES
The city of White Plains boasts a diverse number of organizations and individuals dedicated to seeing their community thrive and succeed. These investments have led to collaborations and partnerships that are helping to expand the network of available services for children and youth in White Plains.

City leadership has worked closely with school district leadership to promote the health and well-being of children. Examples include building workforce development opportunities by partnering with the private sector to create paying jobs and internships for students in different fields, and facilitating a speaker series to introduce high school students to different careers. City representatives noted that this collaboration is facilitated by having similar jurisdictional boundaries (school district and city boundaries are the same), which often is not the case in other regions. A representative for the city noted this about their collaboration success: “Our graduation rates reflect all the work that’s been done right from child care through school, by the city working through the district ... we have very strong graduation rates, very strong college placement rates, and a truly diverse school community.” A nonprofit leader also commented on the work the school has done to support not just the children, but their families. “They have a fair number of programs that are concerned not just with the children, but with the families of children, to bring a greater measure of stability to the family, thinking, therefore, the student is better served.”

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MUNICIPAL SECTOR RESPONDENT

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS LEAD COMPREHENSIVE APPROACHES TO WELL-BEING
There are several intersecting campaigns to address social determinants of health in White Plains that have helped bring together the agendas of stakeholders from multiple sectors. Health care systems in White Plains, for example, embrace a state-level initiative, Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment (DSRIP),\textsuperscript{18} which seeks to reduce avoidable
hospital stays and attendant costs through preventative care measures and community-based collaborations. The initiative deploys Value Based Payment methodologies that require providers to demonstrate how they are working to reduce care costs through an approach that considers social determinants of health. Managed care organizations must "deliberately scope out a relationship with a community-based organization so they can design a program that focuses on the social determinants of health—housing, good-waged jobs, and access to food," says a nonprofit sector respondent. [DSRIP is] paving the way for conversations that may not have been easy in the past." A health care representative also shared, "It's all about health and wellness. [It's] one huge collaboration."

"IT'S REALLY [ABOUT] HOW WE PARTNER WITH DIFFERENT GROUPS TO MAKE SURE THAT PEOPLE HAVE SOCIAL SUPPORT, THEY HAVE JOBS, THEY HAVE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS, AND ALL THOSE THINGS THAT WE ALL KNOW IMPACT OVERALL HEALTH."  

HEALTH SECTOR RESPONDENT

The Healthy Community Initiative (HCI) is another example of the city's cross-sector approach to promoting health and well-being. Spearheaded by White Plains Hospital, the HCI began in 2018 to create a comprehensive vision of community health that embraces shared objectives and input from many sectors. Given significant health and economic disparities within the city—the focus of the HCI is to address social determinants of health through community partnerships and to think collectively and strategically about the resources each organization uses and brings to the table, and the populations each organization serves. A hospital respondent noted, "It's really [about] how we partner with different groups to make sure that people have social support, they have jobs, they have access to healthy foods, and all those things that we all know impact overall health."

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NONPROFIT SECTOR RESPONDENT

Although HCI was in its infancy at the time of data collection, participants in the initiative had identified three priority areas for their collective action: 1) increased screening for chronic diseases; 2) access to healthy food; and 3) attention to mental health issues within the community. In addition to the collective goals, the 'broad-based' community health planning meetings with representatives from many different sectors have prompted organizations to think differently about how they approach their own work and partnerships. For example, a respondent from the education sector noted, "Unified Way has books to give away. How can we partner with the United Way to make sure that our children ... all have lots and lots of books to read? We haven't started yet ... but we're making the connections ... and now we've got to start figuring out how to work a little smarter, and work in partnership with one another to get the best outcomes for kids and families."

Among the community's nonprofits, the work of Feeding Westchester is especially notable since it simultaneously supports one of the city's community health priorities, has established key partnerships across the city of White Plains, and demonstrates links between food access, community health, and social justice. Feeding Westchester is at the heart of a network of nearly 300 partners, like soup kitchens, food pantries, shelters, senior centers, and housing complexes that help them get food to the people who need it. They also have several one to two-acre farm sites that they cultivate in partnership with other nonprofit organizations and government organizations—like the county jail, Ronald McDonald House, the School for the Deaf, and Westchester Land Trust. In addition to producing fresh food, these farm sites are therapeutic for participants, build social capital, and promote social justice. A representative from Feeding Westchester used the prisoner re-entry population as an example, "We have some folks, they get out of the prison system and [because of their work on the farm] feel a renewed sense of connection to where the food system began. They might want to go out and become chefs ... or start a community garden of their own."

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EDUCATION SECTOR RESPONDENT

Beyond the growing and distribution of food, Feeding Westchester helps residents in the county—particularly seniors and those with disabilities—to access SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and other social benefits. They also provide free nutrition education to help build the knowledge, confidence, and skills of residents to be able to shop, cook, and eat healthily on a limited budget. In the past year, Feeding Westchester has also launched partnerships with health care institutions and managed care institutions, to help address the nutritional needs of the Medicaid population with a range of diet-related diseases. Clinicians in select health care offices, for example, are screening patients for food insecurity and implementing a fruit and vegetable prescription program. While no data were available to share at the time of our interviews, the program is following these individuals over time to assess changes in their health and well-being.

COLLABORATIVE MODEL ADDRESSES HOUSING AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

The municipal government in White Plains has a decades-long history of promoting collaboration to combat housing shortages and tie together..."
services for low-income residents. While affordable housing remains one of the biggest challenges in the city, particularly for minority populations, government offices leverage the geographical proximity of public housing to the hospital, courts and other social services as a foundation for its efforts to build community and share resources and objectives. With hundreds of public housing units located near or in the city’s downtown, and many of those being refurbished, the needs of the city’s low-income population have been a point of discussion and planning. The Housing Authority has taken the initiative to work with social services and to expand what it offers to public housing residents. “White Plains has a good model in terms of collaboration,” says one respondent who works for the city. Another representative added, “We’re working closely with the city, with the hospitals, with the community and talking about what their needs are. We have met with every community organization in our area and we continue to do so … We’re hoping to do some joint venturing.”

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MUNICIPAL SECTOR RESPONDENT

This collaborative model has extended to efforts to address an issue affecting the public and private sector: job opportunities for local residents, especially those earning incomes below the regional median. To simultaneously address worker shortages and prepare White Plains residents for the modern economy, the Housing Authority has expanded its mandate to include workforce development initiatives, and to collaborate on other support services. A prime example is the establishment of the White Plains Education and Training Center, located on the ground floor of a recently renovated public housing complex. As a city employee noted, “This was a great economic tool to really support the workforce needs of the corporations and businesses that are in White Plains and also a great economic development tool to attract new businesses and corporations to come into White Plains and assist them with their needs. At the same time … we of course are offering our White Plains residents an incredible opportunity to receive career development in real jobs that are needed today and in the near future.”

The Education and Training Center is focused on addressing identified workforce gaps in culinary and hospitality; technology; and the health care fields. The Education and Training center offers a full commercial teaching kitchen, classrooms, and a computer room. In addition to the development of technical skills, the center works with students to develop “soft skills”—such as teamwork, professional presence, customer service, and communications skills to help ensure success in their job once employed. Prospective employers in the community partner with the center and provide “lunch and learns” for students, as well as offer volunteer, apprenticeship and employment opportunities. Although the center was not conceptualized as a job placement program, this has naturally occurred given the active engagement of employers in the community.

Separate from the Education and Training center, the Housing Authority also holds job fairs to help residents learn about business opportunities and potential employment in new public housing buildings. As one city representative noted, “We want to hire [residents] to work, not just in this particular project [building the new housing development], but in terms of sustainability, to work in jobs once these new buildings are up and running.” However, aside from their engagement with workforce and economic development activities, we were not able to identify the private sector’s involvement in other efforts to promote well-being in White Plains.

SUPPORT EXPANDS FOR IMMIGRANTS, NEWER RESIDENTS

As new populations of immigrants have moved into the city, long-established organizations that have worked to provide services for Hispanic and black populations have continued to adapt and expand their services to meet changing needs. The work can be challenging, especially among populations where fear of immigrant authorities restricts interactions between services and undocumented residents. Because of the current political climate, says one respondent from the nonprofit sector, certain demographics, particularly Haitian and Hispanic communities, remain closed off. “They have discomfort, they’re not sure if they’re protected. So we’re trying to approach them within their churches, or within their direct communities.”

The city of White Plains has worked to establish trust with its residents, through community meetings attended by city representatives and law enforcement. As one law enforcement representative noted, “We don’t count immigration status as a crime. You cannot have a functioning community if people are afraid to talk to police or afraid to come for help when they need it.” Instead, their primary focus is to ensure the well-being and safety of White Plains’ residents. Despite efforts to build trust, significant language barriers remain for many residents, precluding open dialogue on these issues. Translation services are often not available, particularly in courts and government offices. A number of health and community organizations, however, do provide a wide range of resources and supports in Spanish, Haitian Creole, and other languages to help meet the needs of these residents.

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MUNICIPAL SECTOR RESPONDENT

Leadership for the Slater Center are regularly assessing and addressing the needs of the community with centrally located services. This has resulted in new services for senior citizens and immigrant families and was the impetus for the development of the Haitian Resource Center. As one staff member noted, “It is the only center in
White Plains that has this many other organizations operating in this one central place. I’m going out and recruiting organizations to come in. We pick up the slack on anything that’s missing … We see the need, and even if there is not funding to do it, we go ahead and do it.”

“WE DON’T COUNT IMMIGRATION STATUS AS A CRIME. YOU CANNOT HAVE A FUNCTIONING COMMUNITY IF PEOPLE ARE AFRAID TO TALK TO POLICE OR AFRAID TO COME FOR HELP WHEN THEY NEED IT.”

LAW ENFORCEMENT SECTOR RESPONDENT

White Plains holds an annual health fair, sponsored by White Plains Memorial Hospital, in partnership with the Slater Center, and a number of other local nonprofit and faith-based organizations that provide outreach to the Hispanic community. While attendance has declined in recent years, for the past 41 years, the health fair has provided important health screenings to the medically and financially underserved—including breast and prostate cancer exams, and testing for diabetes, sickle cell anemia, and cholesterol.

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NONPROFIT SECTOR RESPONDENT

SUMMARY OF WHITE PLAINS’ EFFORTS TO BUILD A CULTURE OF HEALTH

Based on the Culture of Health Action Framework used to guide Sentinel Community data collection and monitoring in White Plains, evidence supports the coordinated, focused efforts by the city and many local organizations to support the health and well-being of its residents. Through its efforts to strengthen the social conditions and economic opportunities for low-income residents and through the collaborations led by the city through the Youth Bureau and Slater Center, White Plains is Creating Healthier, More Equitable Communities. The influx of people into the city during the day, coupled with the stark economic divide between residents, however, pose unique challenges to fostering a sense of community and Making Health a Shared Value. Efforts by the city to develop more mixed-income, mixed-use housing has the potential to shape progress within this Action Area. The city offers a multitude of successful models and examples of how they are Fostering Cross-Sector Collaboration to Improve Well-Being. Public-private partnerships; collaborations between health care providers and nonprofits; partnerships between the city and schools; and even between the food banks and prison systems help to illustrate the benefits of such collective action. Finally, the establishment of initiatives like the HCI, spearheaded by the hospital and involving social service organizations will help in Strengthening the Integration of Health Services and Systems. As such partnerships continue, there is likely to be a shift from partnered or collaborative approaches to more integrated approaches in addressing the health and well-being of residents through the sharing of resources and data.

Emerging Community Themes

Community leaders in White Plains have worked proactively and collaboratively to support the health and well-being of its more vulnerable residents, including children and youth, economically disadvantaged families and immigrant populations. Despite redevelopment efforts, there is a shortage of affordable housing options and many residents are considered working poor, living paycheck to paycheck. There also remains significant language barriers and a strong mistrust of the systems available to provide support for many immigrant residents, who are reluctant to seek supports and services despite city and law enforcement efforts to assuage fears.
Strong health focus among city leaders. The current administration has a strong understanding of broader drivers of health and is eager to work with a wide range of stakeholders to promote health and well-being across the city. Several of the key organizations working to promote health and well-being in White Plains, including the Youth Bureau and the Slater Center, are affiliated with or funded in large part by the city.

Creative solutions and growing recognition of the value of partnered approaches to addressing health and well-being. White Plains offers many examples of partnered approaches to addressing health and well-being. Partnerships between Feeding Westchester and community organizations, for example, not only address basic nutritional needs of residents, but help to build social capital. The newly developed HCI is changing the way organizations think about partnerships and the potential for shared resources and collective action. And the co-location of the Education and Training Center on the ground floor of a newly renovated public housing complex benefits both residents and local businesses.

Well-established network of public and private organizations that focus on the needs of low-income, non-English speaking and immigrant populations. Organizations such as the Haitian Resource Center, El Centro Hispanico, and the Westchester Hispanic Coalition are highly regarded institutions within the city, which have partnered with a wide range of health and social services to support their populations. These organizations have also demonstrated flexibility and commitment to the vulnerable populations, expanding their scope as demographics have changed over time.

Emphasis on children and youth. White Plains is home to a nationally recognized Youth Bureau, which works with the school system and dozens of other partners to offer a wide range of programming and supports for youth, including a Youth Court. Collectively, this has resulted in higher graduation and job placement rates; less juvenile delinquency; and healthy positive outcomes for youth and families, while improving community quality of life. As a result, White Plains has been named one of the top communities for kids in the country.

What’s Next

White Plains is developing a master plan to address the shortage of affordable housing. This involves the transformation of older buildings into newer mixed-use, mixed-income properties and expanding the overall number of affordable housing units. The city is also working with stakeholders to identify unique needs of potential residents and to co-locate additional services, as they did with the Education and Workforce Training Center. Given that the lack of affordable housing is a serious concern for many residents, it will be important to track this issue over time and assess the impact that such renovations have on the community—not just in terms of additional housing options—but in terms of the co-location of services and a change in the sense of community due to a blending of residents from a variety of incomes and backgrounds.

Tracking engagement of larger corporations headquartered in White Plains may reveal important lessons learned with respect to public-private partnerships for promoting health and well-being in the city. While we were unable to reach respondents from the private sector for this report, and as a result do not have a solid understanding of their current level of involvement in relevant health-related activities, tracking such involvement over time will be important for understanding the potential impact of this sector.

It will also be useful to track the evolution and impact of the HCI. This initiative had only recently begun at the time of data collection efforts. While three priority areas had been identified: 1) increased screening; 2) access to healthy food; and 3) attention to mental health issues within the community, stakeholders from participating organizations had only started to operationalize these broad topics and discuss potential approaches to addressing these priorities. It is likely that the organizations involved in the initiative will expand over time. Key organizations, like Feeding Westchester, were not involved in the initial conversations, yet are central to at least one of the identified priorities. The HCI provides an opportunity for White Plains to move toward a more integrated approach to addressing health and well-being through the sharing of resources and data. Following their progress over time will shed light on the value of the initiative and their contribution to the health and well-being of the community.
References


