

**Healthy St. Petersburg
Program Summary
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We've listened as they have told us how they are picturing themselves living in a Culture of Health, and that they are eager to help build the opportunity to get and stay healthier into the everyday actions of their lives. They want to play their part in creating a nation in which one's ethnicity, income or ZIP code does not hamper the ability to eat fresh food, live on safe streets, sustain emotional and mental well-being, or find and afford health care. They envision schools and workplaces where, instead of sitting all day to learn and work, we can remain active and involved in improving ourselves and the overall well-being of our communities.

--Robert Wood Johnson

Introduction

Why Healthy St. Pete? The city of St. Petersburg, Florida is embarking on an ambitious agenda to address specific areas that would benefit from an emphasis on healthy lifestyles to become a model healthy community within the United States. To achieve such status recognizes that health and wellbeing are interconnected with social, cultural, physical, economic and other factors. Understanding these factors is not enough. What is necessary is community-wide engagement and empowerment to improve overall community health and life quality.

There is considerable data available that describes the population health status of any county in the United States and examines factors that influence health outcomes. More challenging is data that “drills down” to the level of census tract to really determine where particular emphasis needs to be given to each unique neighborhood’s needs to achieve overall population health as a healthy city. This paper examines those factors, from the standpoint of the county of Pinellas within the state of Florida, particularly comparing similar counties in overall population and make-up, as well as, some consideration of the most challenged neighborhoods from a healthy lifestyle perspective.

To aid reading of this document, once a healthy city is defined and data discussed, the focus turns to three key areas pertinent to a healthy city: environment, access, and lifestyle. But first, we start with understanding what makes up a healthy city?

What is a healthy city? An environment where physical activity is encouraged and opportunities are present for its citizens to engage in healthy behaviors. The citizenry of a healthy city recognize that the health benefits of physical activity include improvements in mental and social well-being. This in turn helps prevent illness and disability as issues of obesity, diabetes and other chronic conditions are addressed. From a community standpoint, a healthy citizenry saves on health-related resources in addressing chronic diseases, positively impacts the economy, productivity and in general, creates a more livable city that is attractive to residents, employers and visitors.

Joan Devlin, WHO Secretariat Healthy Cities, notes that in many cases, “the best choices for health are also the best choices for the planet...address[es] poverty and survival...and what often blocks peoples’ development is not the lack of talent or capacity, but the lack of opportunity and encouragement” (EcCoWell, 2013, p. 9.) The opportunity for St. Pete to work together on local issues that affect health and quality of life, cross many sectors:

- public health concerns such as heart disease, substance abuse & air quality
- housing and education
- youth development
- access to health/medical care
- child care and elder care
- recreation
- a clean, healthy environment
- transportation.

Where to begin? A healthy city builds a culture of health using diverse strategies as all recognize that many different factors affect health. Social determinates and the physical environment are especially important because they represent the conditions in which people are born, work, and play. Neighborhoods with affordable healthy food, safe and accessible housing, and quality employment opportunities positively influence behaviors and help to create healthy lifestyles.

Much of the available data is by county. One valuable resource is the *2015 County Health Rankings*, collaboration between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. This work measures the health of almost all counties in the United States and ranks them within states. The measures are standardized and include modeling that acknowledges health policies and programs, health factors and health outcomes.

Measures of health outcomes address both length of life and quality of life from a health and mental health perspective. Health factors address smoking, obesity, exercise, whether healthy food is accessible, clinical/health care, social and economics rankings and physical environment. The data on Pinellas County will aid and guide policy, programmatic, environmental and systems changes relevant to our community, as we build a culture of health, by addressing and identifying gaps that tend to disproportionately and negatively affect certain populations. These health rankings are based on four health factor areas: clinical care, health behaviors, social and economic factors, and physical environment. See Table 1.

Other cities have worked hard to become healthy cities. For example, Ft. Worth, Texas has embarked on a *Fit-Worth* model acknowledging that half of their K-12th grade students are overweight and most likely will have shorter life expectancies than their parents. They recognized the need to work with their citizens to put exercise into their lives every day and that a “food revolution” is needed. The *Trust for America’s Health on Obesity in America* reports that the “average total health cost for a child treated for obesity under private insurance is \$3,743 while the average health care cost for all children covered by private insurance is \$1,108.”

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has acknowledged several healthy cities based on the concept that health is impacted by “all aspects of daily life – from education to economic development” (*The Atlantic*, 2014, para. 1). Examples include Brownsville, Texas, that had an 80% obesity rate of its residents and 33% were diabetic. This city recognized that access to exercise was critical to changing this and partnered with businesses and nonprofits to bring bike trails to within .5 mile of every resident in the community and created more playgrounds. Buncombe County, NC, engaged with over 300 businesses to promote a living wage of \$11.28/hour. Spokane, WA examined intergenerational poverty and partners with business leaders to improve graduate rates and better prepare students for jobs in high-tech industries prevalent there, changing high school graduation rates from 60% to 80% in just seven years.

Concept and Vision

As we think about our vision for Healthy St. Pete we recognize that health must be a shared value with the citizens of St. Petersburg. Taking the cue from Robert Wood Johnson’s *Culture of Health*, this will require cross-sector collaboration to improve wellbeing, examine health disparities in our community in an effort to make ours a healthier, equitable community and strengthen the integration of our present health care services.

St. Pete Characteristics

Demographics. Saint Petersburg sits between the Gulf of Mexico and Tampa Bay. As of 2010, the total Saint Petersburg population was 244,769, shrinking slightly since 2000. The population growth rate is much lower than both the state average rate of 17.6% and the national average rate of 9.7%. Saint Petersburg median household income was \$44,756 in 2008-2012 and has grown by 29% since 2000, passing both the state average rate of almost 22% and the national average rate of 26%. Saint Petersburg median house value of \$156,500 was in 2008-2012 and has grown by 93% since 2000. The house value growth rate is much higher than the state average rate of 62% and the national average rate of 52%. As a reference, the national Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rate for the same period was 26.6%. On average, the public school district that covers Saint Petersburg is better than the state average in quality.

Health and environmental descriptors of St. Pete. Using the county health rankings and examining the 67 counties within the state of Florida, Pinellas County ranks 33rd for length of life and 25th for quality of life. (See Table 1.) For overall health factors Pinellas County ranks 19th. While there is the availability of exercise to all, 20% of adults indicate no physical activity. 86% of the population is screened for diabetes, but only 67% of the adult female population participates in mammography screening. 72% of Pinellas county residents have a high school diploma and 63% of those eligible have attended some college. The physical environment ranking is 23 out of 67 counties, meeting state averages for most areas within this category (air pollution, drinking water violations, severe housing violations, driving alone to work and long commutes to work).

A more important question is how is this changing over time, and whether Pinellas County is improving in overall health rankings or falling? Table 1 shows some comparative data 2010 to present. Pinellas County has lost ground in health outcome rankings and physical environment, but has improved in health factors, social and economic factors and availability of clinical care.

Again, it is important to note that this total county versus the city of St. Petersburg.

In 2012, the *Pinellas County Community Health Assessment (CHA)* was conducted. This assessment identifies unmet health care and human service needs of a population and shares possible interventions, utilizing the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) framework. Several key findings emerged and are consistent with other tools evaluating the overall health of our community and county.

- *Behavioral risk factors, including poor nutrition and limited physical activity*
- *Leading causes of death in Pinellas County are chronic diseases, including cancer and heart disease*
- *Income, neighborhood, gender, and race impact access to health care and health outcomes*
- *Sexually transmitted disease rates are higher in Pinellas than in Florida*
- *Prescription drug abuse and poor mental health are issues of concern*
- *There is a weakened capacity of the Pinellas Local Public Health System to inform, educate, and empower people about health issues, and mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve these problems.*

While the 2012 CHA discussed many aspects of health, what is critical is what it means to the City of St. Petersburg and what has the most opportunity to aid the Healthy St. Pete vision. Again, this report is county based but it did look at vulnerable communities. The area of south St. Petersburg was one of the top five most vulnerable communities within Pinellas County and also was identified as a medically underserved/health professional shortage area. A vulnerable community is defined as one that has more than 16% of its residents living in poverty (12.1% of Pinellas citizens overall fit this definition.) One of the census tracts with the highest percentages of people living in poverty is census tract 216 located in south St. Petersburg with 48% of its population living in poverty. (See Table 2).

Impact of Poverty. Why focus on poverty? The 2012 *Pinellas County Economic Impact of Poverty* report notes that communities with high poverty levels have “nearly double the county rate of verifiable child abuse, twice the average number of births to teenage mothers, significantly higher non-graduation rates from high school, higher unemployment rates, and higher likelihood of living in an area that is considered low-access to healthy food choices.” These social-economic disparities also affect overall community physical and mental well-being. The reality is that poverty is systemic and if not addressed, Healthy St. Pete will be challenged to meet its vision.

Another challenge of poverty is shared in a recent article in the *Washington Post* (2015) commenting that brain science is now showing that poor kids have smaller brains than affluent kids. Lyndsey Layton notes that a study published in *Nature Neuroscience* March 2015 indicates “poverty and lack of access to resources to enrich developmental environment are related to poor school performance, poor test scores and fewer educational opportunities” (para. 5). Other studies mentioned indicate similar findings stressing why early childhood nutrition and high quality health care are critical to aid healthy development.

Neighborhoods of particular concern needing emphasis. Certain data are collected by census tract and this offers an opportunity to look at those areas that perhaps provide the most challenge and need for focus in reaching goals set for Healthy St. Pete. Table 2 shares data on

census tracts whose population is 20% or more living at poverty level. An earlier study done in Pinellas County focused on the “zone” of South St. Petersburg, noting it as the largest risk area in Pinellas County, with an estimated population of 74,000 and 18,600 of those living at or below the federal poverty level. In looking at these few census tracts, the challenges in these communities are particularly worrisome and demand further analysis.

Analysis

To determine St. Pete’s Healthy City concept and approach asks for consideration of available data – both data that examines all of Pinellas County and data that focuses on the city of St. Petersburg. Which data provide the most insight regarding challenges and opportunities St. Pete must consider in its vision of Healthy St. Pete?

Prevalent causes of death in Pinellas County. In 2011, the leading causes of death in Pinellas County were not unlike those across the United States. Roughly half of all deaths in 2011 were due to chronic diseases, cancer and heart disease. Specifically, the top six included cancer (22.8%), heart disease (22.7%), chronic lower respiratory disease (5.7%), unintentional injuries (5.1%), stroke (3.7%) and diabetes mellitus (3%).

In using data sources mentioned already, while many efforts are designed to provide access to health services, healthy food, exercise and other positive contributors to health, the census tracts described in Table 2 need significantly enhanced effort. As long as health disparities exist, it will be difficult for St. Pete to achieve the vision desired of becoming a “Healthy St. Pete.”

The Healthy St. Pete Initiative is recommended to focus on lifestyle, access and environment as three key areas for which improvement will significantly enhance the overall health of St. Pete. These three key areas must not be addressed as silos but rather intertwined to achieve the greatest impact.

And, as census tract analysis shows, the vulnerable area within South St. Pete, correlates with the State of Obesity report prepared by Robert Wood Johnson. This report focused on a series of in-depth interviews with public health experts focusing on Black and Latino communities, and again echoed three important recommendations, which are reinforced in this white paper:

- *Expanding access to affordable healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity by increasing resources for programs, connecting obesity-prevention initiatives with other ongoing community programs, and other approaches;*
- *Providing education and addressing cultural differences to both improve people’s knowledge about nutrition and physical activity and make initiatives more relevant to their daily lives; and*
- *Making sustainability, community input, involvement and shared leadership top priorities of obesity-prevention initiatives from the outset (the State of Obesity, 2014).*

Lifestyle

Lifestyle provides an opportunity for health promotion with a prevention focus. The emphasis is on livable communities that allow families and friends to be active together. As city government,

policy makers, interested organizations and private citizens work together in community redevelopment, with a focus on parks, playgrounds, and walkable communities, these efforts will help with overall community health. Efforts focused solely on prevention though have shown to not be successful as there is need for education and availability, which is viewed as Access.

Access

In this context, access focuses on education, advocacy, availability and outreach. All areas of St. Pete would benefit from knowledge and education as to what foods give energy, what enhances cognitive brain development and this is why there is need for access to affordable fresh fruits and vegetables. Health needs to be key in city planning agendas, and as part of community redevelopment, “food deserts” need to take priority in elimination to assure access. Again, lifestyle and access are important, but to be truly successful we must also address environment.

Environment

The environment focuses on safe and sustainable transportation links, utilizing the talents of urban planning as walking is encouraged via sidewalks, bike lanes and trails. Public transportation is improved and allows all to live in workable communities. *Healthy People (HP) 2020* highlight the importance of addressing the social determinants of health by including as one of its four overarching goals, “Create social and physical environments that promote good health for all”.

Next steps

The outline of what needs to occur next is addressed in these bullet statements:

- Design of an Action Plan to include what City of St. Pete can contribute, what are voids, what changes to policy needed?
- Determine collaboration and partnerships
 - City government, employers, community advocates, health care and public health professionals and services, grant makers, policymakers, educators, welfare services, others
- Strategies surrounding
 - Lifestyle: health promotion, prevention, safe exercise options
 - Opportunities for families to be active together
 - Livable communities
 - Community redevelopment
 - Parks
 - Playgrounds
 - Fitness zones
 - Public transportation
 - Access:
 - Health Care, Health Care Professionals
 - Eliminating medically underserved and health care professional shortages in certain neighborhoods
 - Nutritious food
 - In all areas of city access to affordable, fresh fruits and vegetables
 - addressing of “food deserts”
 - Health in city planning agenda

- Environment:
 - Air quality, safe neighborhoods
 - Safe, sustainable transportation links (urban planning)
 - Sidewalks, bike lanes, trails – encouragement of walking – active living
 - ”Walking buses” to schools
 - Workable communities.

Conclusion/Summary

While this white paper provides some insight into the level of health of St. Petersburg, particular vulnerable communities within St. Petersburg, and comparative data of Pinellas County to other Florida counties, the real work of a Healthy City project attains success when partners from all aspects of the community work together on the same platform. The experiences of other cities working on a similar initiative have been offered as examples as part of this document, while simultaneously recognizing that each city has its uniqueness rooted in its own experiences and needs.

The city of St. Petersburg has much to offer in terms of green spaces, parks, trails, beaches and other opportunities for exercise. In fact, St. Pete scored 100% for availability of exercise. The challenge remains as to how to get those who don't exercise, don't eat healthy, engage in risky behaviors, and/or smoke to see the value of both their personal well-being as the health of the overall community, and provide the resources for vulnerable communities to engage in healthier lifestyles.

It will take policy makers, healthcare providers, educators, interested citizens working together to determine the most meaningful approaches to engage those least likely due to resources, challenges in daily living, to make changes on their own to improve their health status and outcomes. For this, best practices in engagement built on other cities experiences as they worked toward a similar vision and mission, should be considered.

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TABLE 1
Pinellas County Health Rankings Selected Years 2010 & 2015
Compared to Top US Counties and Florida
Note: similar data not available in all categories both years;
those rankings only within Florida are compared to 67 counties (**bolded**)

	2010	Top US	FL	2015	Top US	FL
Health Outcome Ranking	29			33		
Length of Life	26			38		
Premature death (life lost before age 75 per 100,000)	8,482	6,978	7,933	8,025	5,200	6,893
Quality of Life	28			25		
Health Factors Ranking	24			19		
Access to Exercise Opportunities	NA	NA	NA	100%	92%	93%
Health Behaviors	23			17		
Adult Obesity	26%	21%	24%	24%	25%	26%
Sexually transmitted diseases	371	149	318	414	138	402
Adult impaired driving	NA	NA	NA	30%	14%	29%
Teen birth rate per 1000	42	35	46	36	20	36
Clinical Care	13			7		
Uninsured	19%	18%	24%	22%	11%	24%
Social and Economic Factors Rating	40			30		
High school grad rate	55%	75%	64%	72%	NA	75%
Children in poverty	17%	14%	17%	24%	13%	25%
Physical Environment Ranking	19			23		
Food environment index: 2010 measured in %; 2015 0-10 with 10 best	59%	60%	50%	7.2	8.4	

Source: County Health Rankings, collaboration between Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Institute.

Table 2
 2000 US Census Data
 By Certain Census Tracts of St. Petersburg and compared to
 Pinellas County and the State of Florida

Census tract	% Black	% White	Median age	% over 25 without HS diploma	Unemployment rate	Median Household income	% below poverty level
216	60.9%	35.9%	47.5	42.9%	14.1%	\$8,494	54.5%
205	85.6%	9.4%	36.3	41.9%	12.7%	\$19,125	41.1%
210	94.7%	4.4%	37.5	50.1%	32.9%	\$16,212	36.8%
212	91.8%	6.5%	32.7	43.8%	16.4%	\$19,892	32.9%
207	94.9%	1.9%	37	38.6%	18.4%	\$22,995	29.0%
206	96%	1.8%	33	38.9%	10.9%	\$22,321	28.2%
201.1	73.9%	21.1%	37	25.6%	12.7%	\$26,904	22.3%
220	78.1%	78.1%	44	31.5%	6.6%	\$32,379	20%
Pinellas County	8.9%	85.9%	16.5	16%	4.3%	\$37,111	10%
State of FL	14.6%	78%	38.7	20%	5.6%	\$38,819	12.5%

Source: 2000 US Census