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Executive Summary

DRAFT

Section 1: Introduction

PURPOSE

Our agency's mission statement states "Forward Pinellas will provide leadership to align resources and plans that help to achieve a compelling vision for Pinellas County, our individual communities, and our region." Specific action items included in our mission emphasize community participation, sustainability, cost-effectiveness, and high ethical standards. By definition, this statement and these priorities require equity as the mission statement cannot be achieved if all Pinellas County residents are not receiving equal treatment by and equal benefit from the work of Forward Pinellas.

Over the past few years, however, certain indicators of inequity on the local and national level and begun to present themselves. In 2019, UNITE Pinellas, an organization focusing on equity issues in Pinellas County, commissioned a report on equity conditions in Pinellas County. The report indicated some significant disparities in education, opportunity, wealth, and income between white residents and residents of color in the county. People of color had higher rates of unemployment and lower wages, even if they had the same level of education as their white counterparts. Additionally, the county has seen an increase in poverty since 2010, with 25% of black residents living below the poverty level compared to 12% of whites. Working poverty (those with jobs who earn less than 200% of poverty level) levels are higher in all communities of color compared to white residents. The overarching takeaway of the UNITE Pinellas report was that there are significant equity issues in Pinellas County that have negative economic impacts on all residents.

In response, Forward Pinellas Executive Director Whit Blanton asked for an internal review of the agency's practices and how they contribute to increasing or decreasing inequities observed in Pinellas County. Further, the national and local civil unrest observed in summer 2020 indicated increased need for government agencies, including Forward Pinellas, to review their operations, products, and organizational structure to determine their effect on equity conditions. To fulfill its mission, Forward Pinellas completed this internal review of the agency's practices, programs, structures and products to determine the impact the agency has on equity conditions in Pinellas County.

DEFINITIONS

Bias-Prejudice toward one group and its members relative to another group

Community Indicator-The means by which we can measure socioeconomic conditions in the community. All community indicators should be disaggregated by race, if possible.

Contracting Equity-Investments in contracting, consulting, and procurement should benefit the communities a jurisdiction serves, proportionate to the jurisdiction's demographics.

Equity Result-The conditions we aim to achieve in the community.

Explicit Bias-Biases that people are aware of and operate consciously. They are expressed directly.

Implicit Bias-Biases people are usually unaware of and that operate at the subconscious level. Implicit bias is usually expressed indirectly.

Individual Racism-Pre-judgement, bias, or discrimination based on race by an individual.

Institutional Racism-Policies, practices, and procedures that work better for white people than for people of color, often unintentionally.

Performance Measure-Performance measures are at the county, department, or program level. Appropriate performance measures allow monitoring of the success of implementation of actions that have a reasonable chance of influencing indicators and contributing to results. Performance measures respond to three different levels: 1) Quantity-how much did we do?; 2) Quality-how well did we do it?; and 3) Is anyone better off?

Racial Equity-Race can be used to predict life outcomes, e.g., disproportionality in education (high school graduation rates), jobs (unemployment rate), criminal justice (arrest and incarceration rates), etc.

Structural Racism-A history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions, combining to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color.

Transactional Approach: Issue-based approach; helps individuals negotiate existing structures; solutions “transact” with institutions; short-term gains for communities, but leaves existing institutions in place.

Transformative Approach: Cut across multiple institutions; Focus on policy and organizational culture; alter the ways institutions operate; shift cultural values and political will to create racial equity.

Workforce Equity-The workforce of a jurisdiction reflects the diversity of its residents, including across the breadth (functions and departments) and depth (hierarchy) of government.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

As identified in the agency Scope of Work (SOW), Forward Pinellas conducted a robust equity assessment based on a three phased framework. As described below, the equity assessment phases were centered around participatory planning processes. Phase 1 was initiated by first conducting interviews with regional equity professionals and other stakeholders to define the objectives of the assesment. Then, after the SOW was developed, Forward Pinellas requested stakeholder feedback on the elements of the equity assessment SOW. This theme was carried through the entire equity assessment to ensure the process and outcome of the equity assessment represented the concerns, needs and values of all people in Pinellas County.

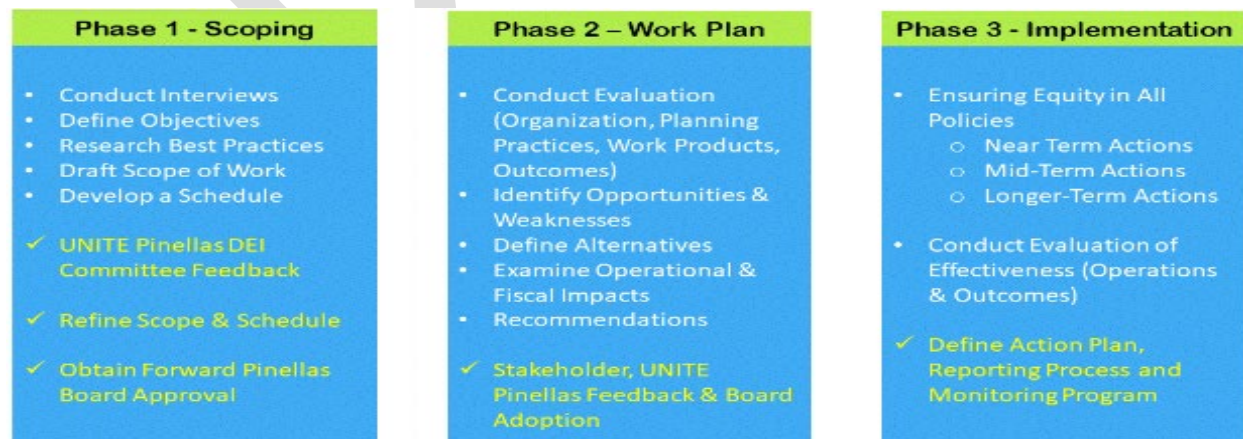


Figure 1: Assessment Process

PHASE 1 – SCOPING

At the initiation of the project, Forward Pinellas developed stakeholder contacts to obtain diverse public comment and input into the issues and areas of inquiry for the equity assessment. The identification of project stakeholders influenced the project direction as their involvement guided the development of the scope of work. One of the most prominent stakeholders, UNITE Pinellas, was identified early as they are an advisory body dedicated to racial equity. The UNITE Pinellas partnership provided guidance and input on the various phases and tasks for the entire equity assessment.

After identification of the stakeholder community was developed, Forward Pinellas conducted initial interviews with a diverse sample of defined stakeholders to solicit feedback on the project objectives and the draft scope of work. The interviews defined the objectives and equity considerations for the scope of work.

Concurrently with the stakeholder conversations, Forward Pinellas conducted an extensive literature review to include the research of case studies and best practices for developing the equity assessment parameters. The research aided in the development of the scope of work and outlined the questions for the stakeholder interviews. The literature resources included recent academia research, reports from organization such as the Government Alliance on Race and Equity, articles in professional journals, peer reviewed journal articles, and data from government websites. Information from websites was used parsimoniously after scrupulous fact checking. As the intent of the equity assessment was to conduct a fact-based assessment which effectively audited the agency equity related processes, avoiding any bias from cultural narratives was essential.

After conducting the literature review, Forward Pinellas then refined the project objectives and project schedule. Additionally, the community engagement plan was designed to provide a diverse range of public participation techniques to inform, consult, involve and collaborate with stakeholders and community partners on the development and implementation of the equity assessment action items. The project objectives, draft scope of work and outreach plan were discussed with project stakeholders prior to finalizing and comments from the stakeholders resulted in modifications to the aforementioned documents.

After Forward Pinellas conducted the initial stakeholder interviews and literature review, the final versions of the project objectives and scope of work were presented to the Forward Pinellas Board. In addition to obtaining approval from the Board, the presentation of the objectives and scope of work was intended to gauge the interest of Board members to act as “equity champions” to foster the implementation of the equity assessment action plans.

PHASE 2 – WORK PLAN

The second phase identified as the “work plan” was the most extensive part of the equity assessment and included the collection, review, development, organization, and analysis of data. The work plan was the most critical component of the analysis portion of the equity

assessment and required close coordination with stakeholders and robust public outreach. A three-prong data assessment framework was developed and included specific strategies to collect experiential, quantitative and qualitative data. The data analysis included internal and external agency factors, as well as public interest factors.

The work plan included the development of equity benchmarks, where were included as a means to measure the baseline equity considerations and processes utilized for internal agency planning assessments, as well as the parameters for developing action plans to be included in the strategic plan. As discussed in the Alternative Analysis section of this report, Forward Pinellas conducted a peer exchange with other similar agencies as well as a vigorous examination of other agency equity practices.

Equity benchmarks were also developed as a baseline for the action items to use as performance measures to monitor through time. These benchmarks were developed from resources to include but not limited to the following: the 2019 Pinellas County Equity Profile developed by Policy Link; current and historical Census data; data compiled by the Pinellas County Human Resources Department and Office of Human Rights; and the 2020 Regional Equity Report developed by the Tampa Bay Partnership Foundation.

The internal agency variables evaluated include agency practices, planning analyses and products. Specifically, Forward Pinellas workforce and committee composition; strategic business plan; reporting and fiscal processes. This includes a thorough analysis of a wide-range of planning products such as the Long-Range Transportation Plan, Countywide Plan, and the Unified Planning Work Program.

The external agency variables evaluated include measurements of planning outcomes from Forward Pinellas planning activities, both land use and transportation plans. A thorough analysis of criteria for awarding and funding projects and the outcomes of these practices are included in the Agency Analysis section of this report.

Experiential data was collected through public outreach efforts and stakeholder feedback. The data collection process for experiential data was through listening sessions, face-to-face conversations, focus groups, a public survey, and multiple meetings. The experiential data is the lived experiences which were the proverbial heart of the entire equity assessment. The multiple life stories shared with Forward Pinellas obtained through outreach process have considerably shaped the direction for the equity assessment action plans and strategic plan. After the data was collected and analyzed, it was disclosed to stakeholders and internally to Forward Pinellas leadership and staff. The remainder of Phase 2 included the development of a Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Matrix, a needs assessment, an alternatives analysis, and a feasibility analysis which are disclosed later in this report. Phase 2 included additional stakeholder engagement as well as presentations to the Forward Pinellas committees on the equity assessment findings and draft action items. Conclusion of Phase 2 is represented as the final agency recommendations and report which outlines the findings and action items for the equity assessment to be implemented in Phase 3.

PHASE 3 – IMPLEMENTATION

In this task, Forward Pinellas will monitor the equity assessment actions plans to determine the level of effectiveness at improving agency practices and social conditions identified during Phase 2. This long-term effort is the ongoing monitoring activities which will occur at defined intervals and will include performance standards to determine if the action plans are accomplishing the set objectives. The results from the collected data will be used to update a website dashboard providing transparency for the equity action plans and will be included in the Forward Pinellas annual report.

Forward Pinellas will continue to analyze the level of success of the action plans and adjust the equity policies, objectives and strategies which frame the specific action plans that are not meeting desired results. The results of this analysis will be included in the Forward Pinellas annual report. The intent of Phase 3 is continual program improvement and relationship building processes to increase equitable conditions for all people, especially racial minorities, residing within Pinellas County.

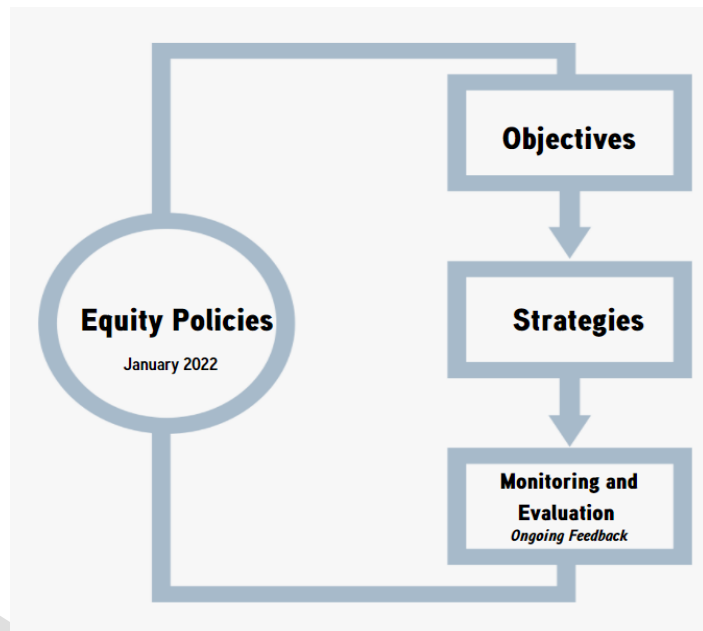


Figure 2: Equity Review

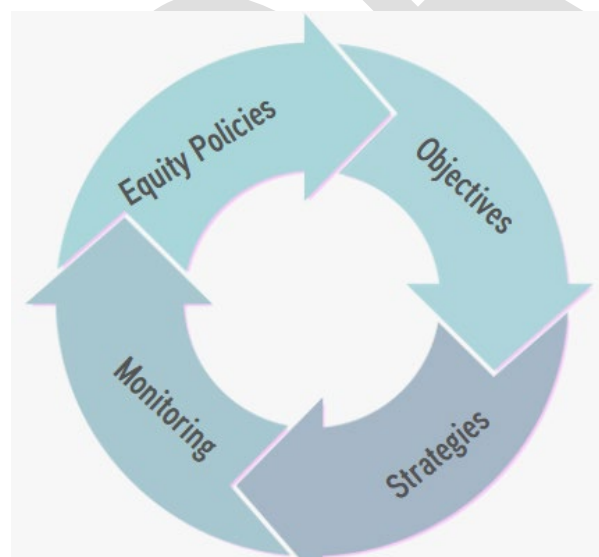


Figure 3: Equity Review

PLANNER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Planning is a broad and diverse field with opportunities to work in all aspects of the built and economic environments. Planners can focus on land use, transportation, the environment, resource allocation, food systems, urban/neighborhood design, or community development, just to name a few. Within these specializations, planners have a broad range of responsibilities. Collaboration with governmental and community organizations, coordination of resources and projects, and public outreach are of high importance in the planning profession.

Additionally, planners spend time gathering data, presenting plans and research studies to various groups, and working with and advising elected officials.

As with many professions, planners have a professional organization called the American Planning Association (APA) which offers a professional certification called the AICP. Many Forward Pinellas planners are APA members and are AICP (American Institute of Certified Planners) certified. The APA/AICP has a code of ethics which explains, among other things, the overarching goals of the profession. Relating to equity, the code of ethics specifies the following:

“We shall seek social justice by working to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of the disadvantaged and to promote racial and economic integration. We shall urge the alteration of policies, institutions, and decisions that oppose such needs.”

Through this equity assessment, Forward Pinellas seeks exemplify this statement by looking at our policies, practices, and the results of our work to ensure our products work toward a more socially, economically, and environmentally just atmosphere in Pinellas County.

FORWARD PINELLAS RESPONSIBILITIES

Forward Pinellas is the combined Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Planning Council (PCC) for Pinellas County. Our agency is overseen by the Forward Pinellas Board, which is made up of elected officials from local governments around the county. MPOs exist as mandated by the state and federal governments to research, coordinate, and plan for the transportation needs of the urban area to which they are assigned. These organizations work with other community and governmental agencies in their jurisdiction to oversee funding, planning, and implementation of transportation related projects. The plans developed by MPOs must take multimodal transportation methods into consideration including cycling, walking, and public transit. Additionally, the methods and complexity of plans must be commensurate with the transportation needs of the area for which the MPO has jurisdiction.

While we serve a broad range of functions in the county, it is important to emphasize those areas in which we are directly involved and those with which we have limited involvement, authority, or influence. The principal functions of our agency are described below.

- Conduct and communicate research and data on trends and conditions
 - Land use and transportation considerations
 - Work with other agencies when transportation and land use are involved (ex: economic development, housing, employment)
- Facilitate planning and outreach activities with local government departments, community organizations, and other groups
- Allocate funding from the federal and state government
- Obtain and allocate funding through grants
- Fund initiatives to incentivize certain planning activities, programs, and practices
- Offer guidance and consultation services to local governments
- Ensure community engagement in county planning activities

- Manage, review, and revise important guiding documents including the Long Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Plan, and Countywide Plan

Importantly, while Forward Pinellas serves many important functions that shape the built and economic environment in Pinellas County, there are some activities that shape our built environment in which we are not directly involved, nor do we have direct authority or expertise to provide guidance in these areas. Below is a summary of these activities.

- Urban or community design
 - Layout of new neighborhoods or developments
 - Design of specific buildings or sites
- Transportation Design
 - Roadway/intersection design
 - Planning specific transit routes or stops
- Architecture or engineering
- Building codes
- Pass/enforce ordinances or laws
- Food accessibility
- Access to healthcare

Section 2: Equity Emphasis Area Identification and Analysis

EQUITY EMPHASIS AREAS

As part of the Forward Pinellas Equity Assessment, it was important for staff to look at previous means of identifying equity emphasis areas and determine how they might be improved for future analysis. In the past, our agency conducted a population analysis utilizing American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates to identify Environmental Justice areas as part of our compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Executive Order 12898 for Environmental Justice, and the U.S. Department of Transportation Order on Environmental Justice. This population analysis determined the broad geographic location, total number, and percentage of population groups meeting the targeted demographics for race and income. Specifically, groups identified as: Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian American, American Indian and Alaskan Native, Native-Hawaiian and other {pacific Islander, and Low-Income. The analysis was documented in the Forward Pinellas Environmental Justice 2015 Demographic Analysis Report, and the data therein was used in prioritization for our Long-Range Transportation Planning efforts, as well as for our Transportation Improvement Program. While these metrics have been effective in the past, we felt it necessary to update these areas of equity emphasis as part of our internal equity review, to specifically reflect communities that have been historically marginalized in Pinellas County. These communities include minority communities and low-income communities as included in the EJ Report with the addition of the following: limited English-speaking communities, communities with limited vehicle access directly tied to lower income levels, and communities that meet all of the above listed criteria. The inclusion of these additional populations was based on feedback received from listening sessions with the public.

For the equity emphasis area analysis, we first collected data from the US Census American Community Survey data sets. These areas were isolated to the census tract level since these aggregated geographies tend to be more accurate than lower-level census block groups. In addition, some of the data we wanted to analyze was not available at the census block group level and to be consistent across our analysis, the tract level was used. Once the ACS data sets were pulled and joined to their associated census tracts, we then calculated the countywide averages for each of the primary metrics we wanted to analyze. These are shown below:

- Percent of No Vehicle Households: 7.78%
- Percent of Limited English-Speaking Households: 12.7%
- Percent Minority Population: 22.15%
- Percent of Population Below Poverty: 14.7% (20% was used for analysis to account for fixed income households)

These populations collectively equate to a geographic area encompassing 32% of the county landmass. From here we used this data to isolate Pinellas County into the following equity emphasis areas, based on census tracts that were above the county wide averages listed above.

Selected Emphasis Areas:

1. Above Average Minority Population
2. Minority No Vehicle Access and Population Below Poverty Above Average
3. Minority Limited English-Speaking Households Above Average
4. Areas with All Equity Emphasis Criteria (Listed Above) Above Average

These equity emphasis areas for Pinellas County are mapped below:

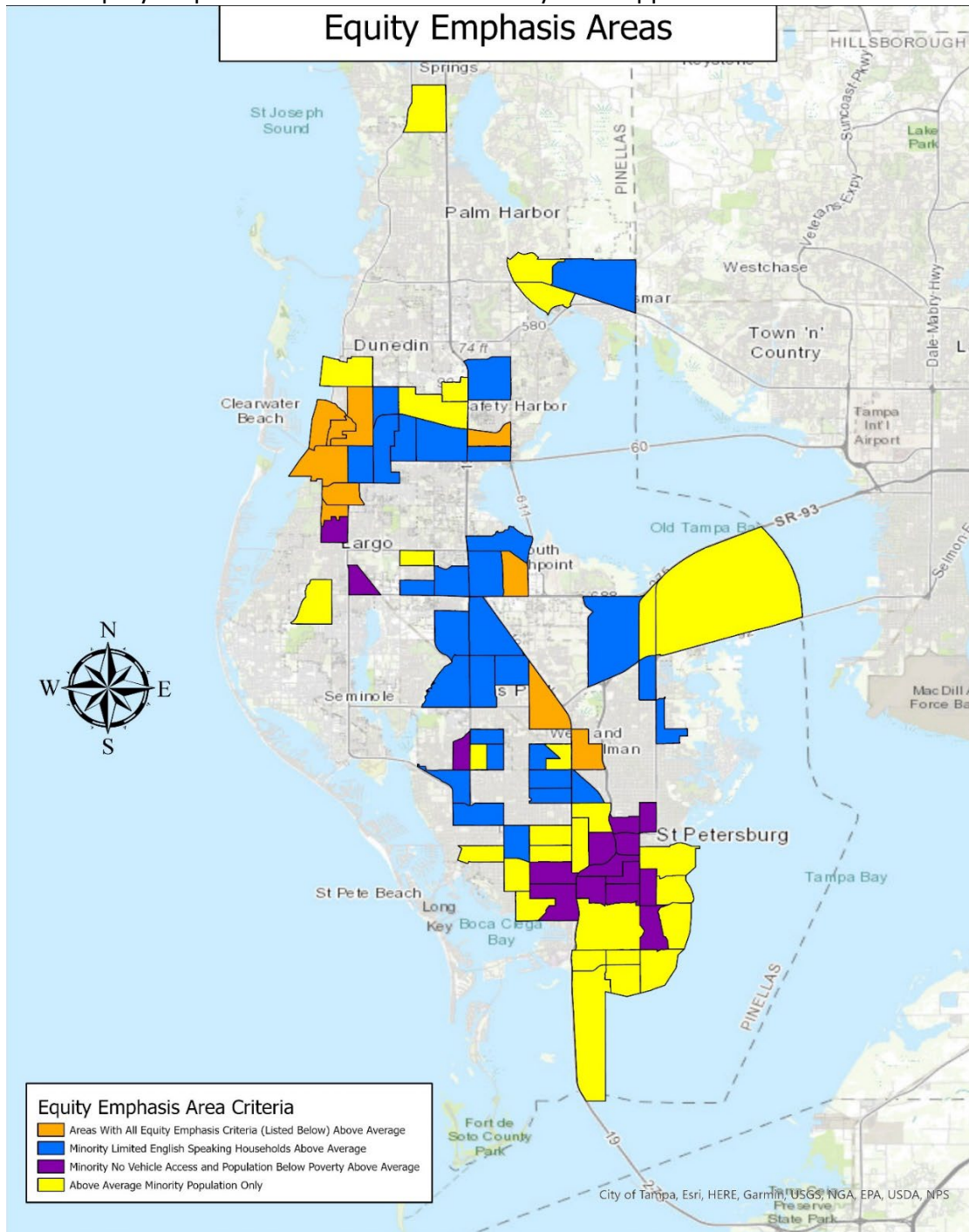


Figure 4: Map of Equity Emphasis Areas

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PLAN ANALYSIS

The first analysis we performed utilizing our newly defined equity emphasis areas involved evaluating how much of our Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) investments were within these areas. This analysis involved using Geographic Information System software to determine which projects intersect our defined equity emphasis areas, what percentage of the TIP projects intersect these areas, and finally what cost allocation is being spent in these areas based on these percentages. Based on our initial analysis we found that roughly 978 million dollars (26.6%) of the projects identified within the TIP fall within the Above Average Minority Population Only tracts, 482 million dollars (13.14%) within the Minority No Vehicle Access and Population Below Poverty tracts, 1.04 billion (28.2%) within the Minority Limited English-Speaking Households tracts, and finally 36 million within the All Criteria tracts (0.98%). This means that within the current five-year TIP (2021/22-2025/26) 68.9% of all project dollars are being spent within an equity emphasis area.

While these data points are promising, we felt that it was important to break this down further within each equity emphasis area to determine what types of projects were receiving these project dollars. This was done to ensure that our agency is held accountable in prioritizing projects that these communities want prioritized. Differentiating project type is especially pivotal to the Equity Assessment because the Equity Assessment survey data demonstrate that disadvantaged communities in Pinellas County have an overall higher difficulty getting to basic destinations, like work and school. Further, these people informed Forward Pinellas through listening sessions, survey data, and focus groups that public transportation, walking, and biking are common modes of transportation.

This chart shows projects by project type in one of the major four equity emphasis areas:

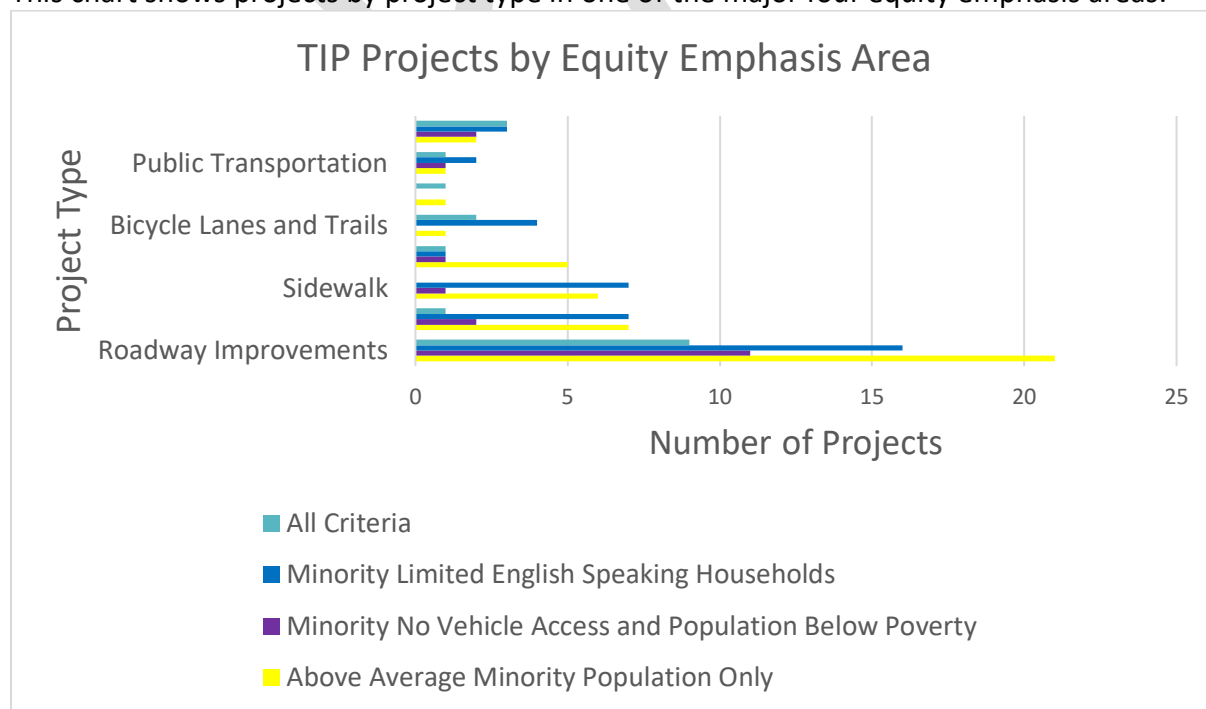


Figure 5: TIP Projects by Equity Emphasis Area

This analysis shows that, while the majority of TIP funding is going to our defined Equity Emphasis Areas, the types of projects being funded are not consistent with community surveys that have requested a greater emphasis on public transportation and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Forward Pinellas is committed to ensuring that future project prioritization has a strong emphasis on community demands so that a greater concentration of funding can be allocated to more pedestrian friendly and multi-modal alternatives. This goal will be actualized through the Equity Assessment Strategic Plan near-term, mid-term and long-term action plans.

****Note: The TIP only includes State and Federal funding for transit projects and does not reflect the distribution of local resources that are utilized around the county for transit services.**

SAFE STREETS ANALYSIS

In the past few years Forward Pinellas, as part of our Vision Zero effort, have begun to implement our Safe Streets Pinellas framework for a safer and more equitable Pinellas County.

Throughout this process we have determined that roughly 70% of our High Injury Network and High Injury Hot Spots fall within the equity emphasis areas identified above. Specifically, despite the equity emphasis areas comprising only 32% of the entire county landmass, the predominant number of crashes occurs within these communities. The map illustrates this

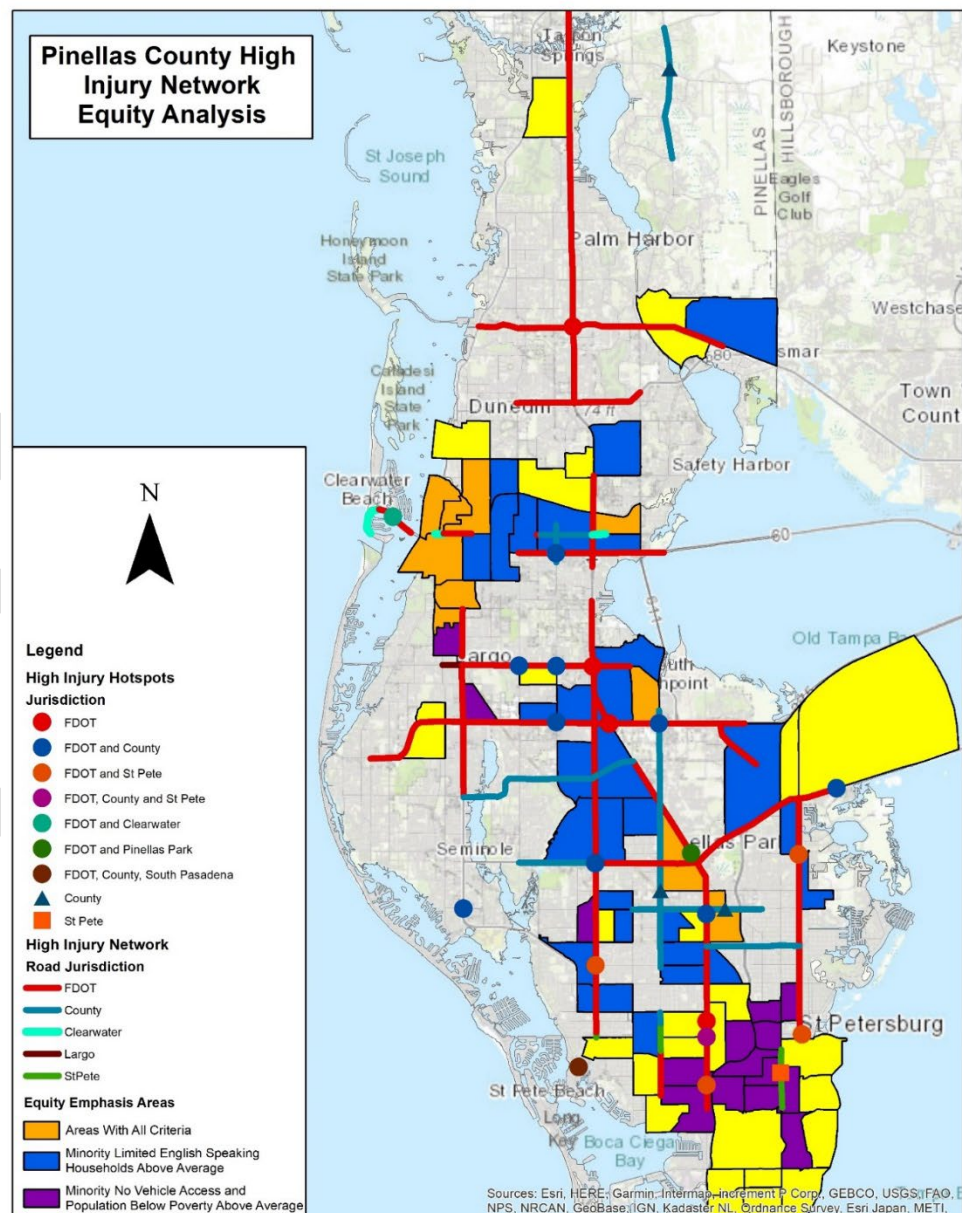


Figure 6: Map of High Injury Network

point further and provides a visual for the disproportionate number of crashes occurring in the equity emphasis areas

To look at this further we wanted to analyze projects within our TIP that fall along a High Injury Network and/or intersect one of our defined Hot Spots to determine the extent to which our agency is prioritizing projects that can best Improve the safety of communities within these equity emphasis areas. To do this, similar to the analysis performed for the TIP projects, we looked at how many TIP projects intersected a Hot Spot or High Injury Network. From there we took the percentage of that project that intersected the defined Hot spots and High Injury Networks and multiplied that percentage by the cost of the project to properly allocate the cost to the extent of the project being improved on the Hot Spot and/or High Injury Network. The total costs of projects being spent on High Injury Network improvements within each equity emphasis area can be seen in this pie chart.

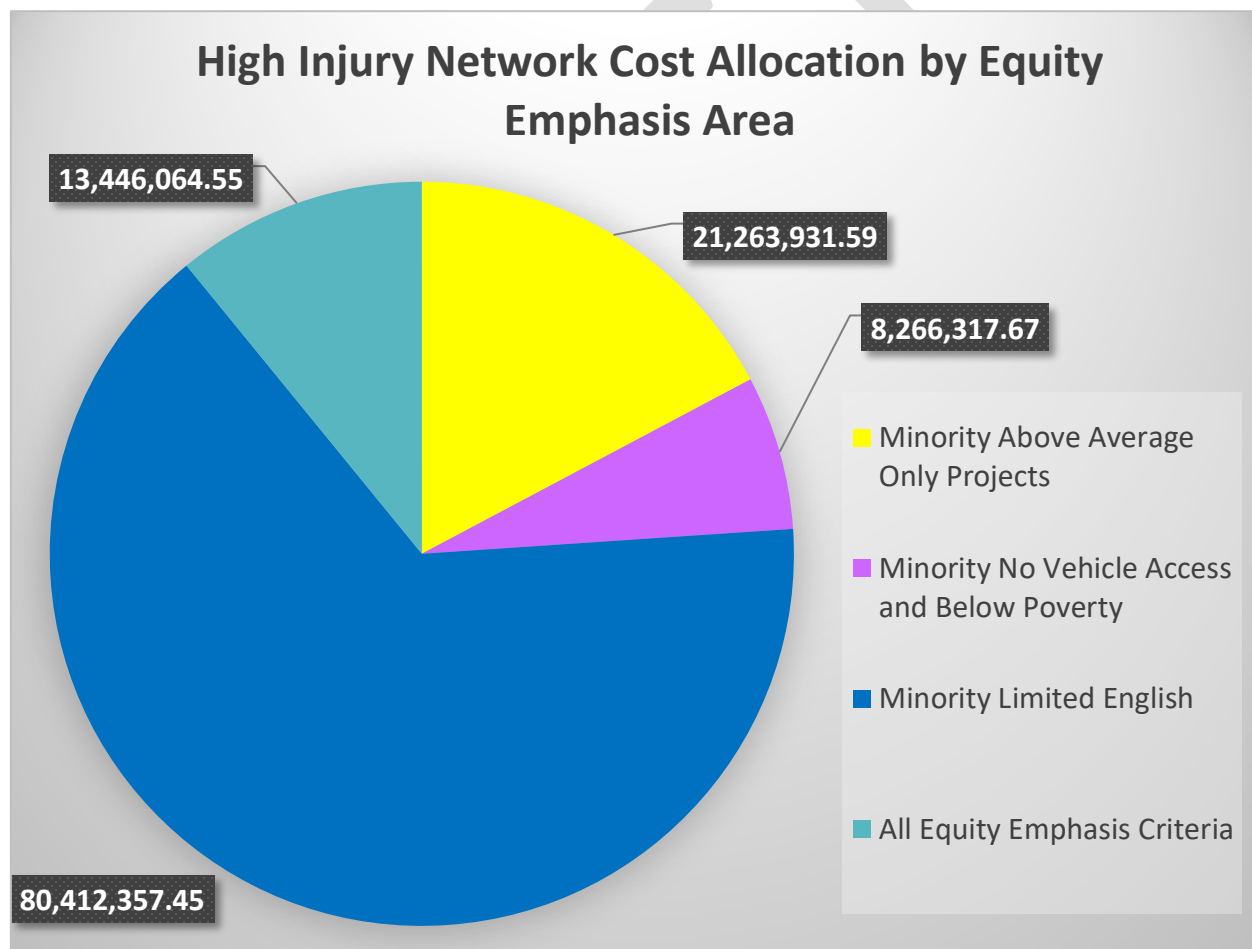


Figure 7: Graph of High Injury Network Cost Allocation

The total costs of projects being spent on High Injury Hot Spot improvements within each equity emphasis area can be seen in this pie chart.

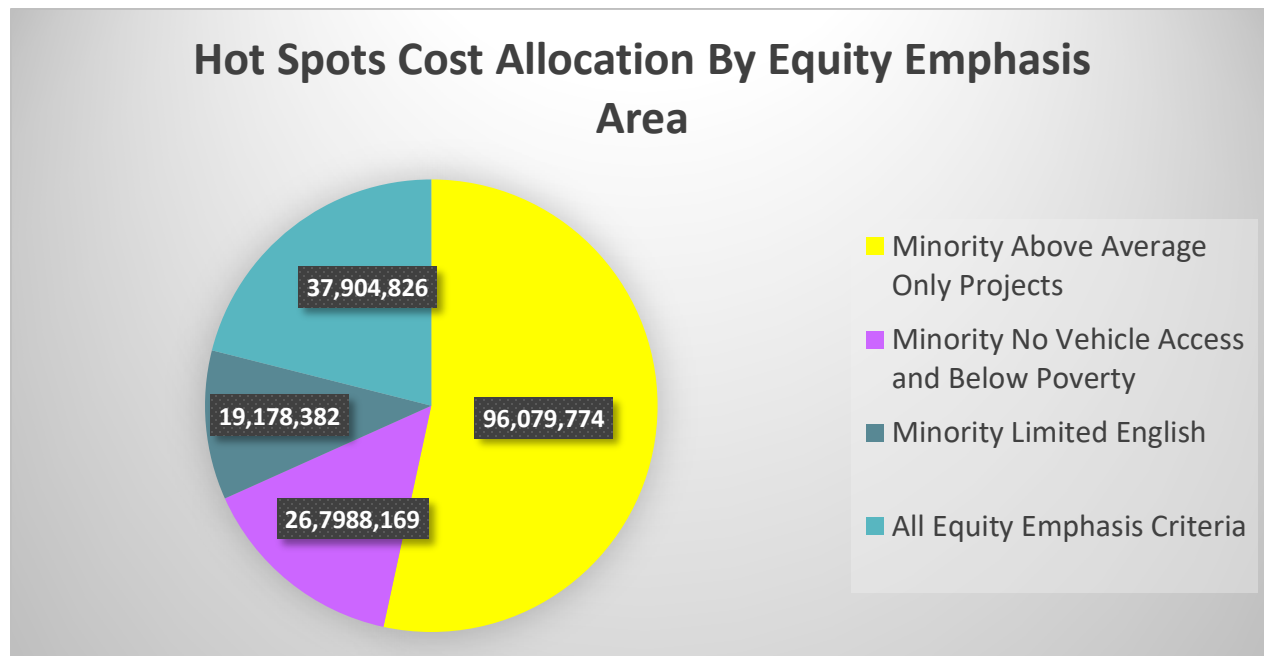


Figure 8: Graph of Hot Spots Cost Allocation

While these figures look promising, with a substantial amount of funding within the TIP going to improvements along High Injury Networks and High Injury Hot Spots, *when adjusted for total TIP funding, the entirety of funding spent on High Injury Network improvements within our defined equity emphasis areas is roughly 3.36% of total TIP funding, and roughly 0.05% for High Injury Hot Spots.*

LAND-USE AND EQUITY

As a transportation and land-use agency, for our final analysis we wanted to look at countywide development trends as they relate to our newly defined equity emphasis areas. Given that Pinellas County is largely built out with very little new developable land, we also included redevelopment within our analysis. From this analysis we determined that from 2015 to 2020 Forward Pinellas received 64 land-use cases related to development or redevelopment that triggered a Countywide Plan Map Amendment. Of these 64 cases 26 of them fell within a defined equity emphasis area. While this may seem as though less than half of new development and redevelopment cases are occurring within an equity emphasis area, given that the equity emphasis areas comprise a smaller percentage of the county land area as a whole, the 26 cases actually represent a greater area of coverage (8.4%) of the equity emphasis areas, then the 64 total cases cover of the entire county (2.7%). Furthermore, of these cases that fell within the equity emphasis areas, roughly 17.65% fell within the Minority Only Above Average areas, 2.94% within the Minority No Vehicle Access and Population Below Poverty areas, 49.9% within the Minority Limited English areas, and finally 32.35% within the All Criteria areas. This is illustrated in greater detail in the figure below.

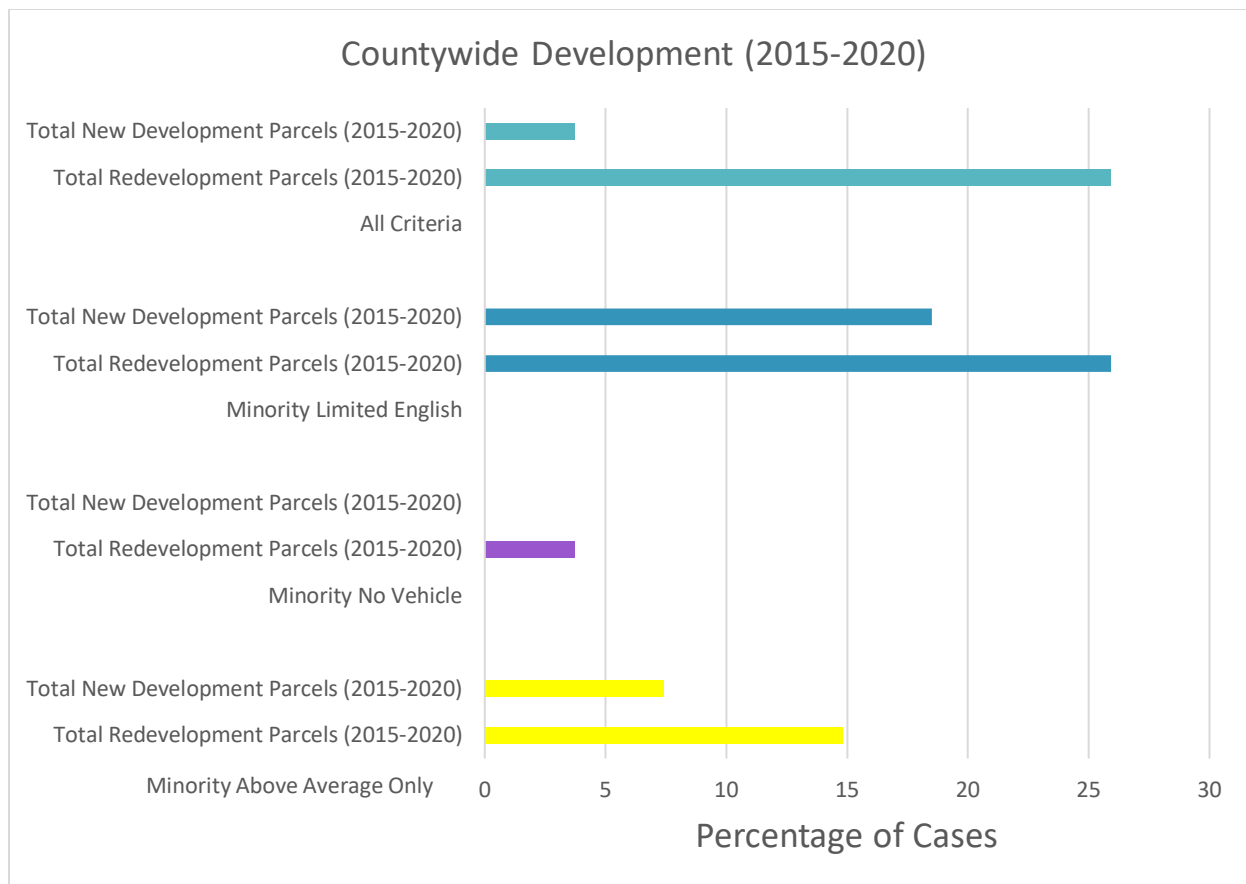


Figure 9: Graph of Countywide Development Trends

It should be noted that while Forward Pinellas does manage land-use changes including but not limited to development and redevelopment, it is only for those changes that are deemed to have a countywide impact, i.e., they trigger a specific set of criteria outlined within the Forward Pinellas Countywide Plan. Land-use changes at a local level that do not come through the Countywide Plan Map amendment process are not factored into this analysis. Cases that come through the Countywide Plan Map amendment process are those cases that are deemed to have countywide impact. More information as to what criteria is required to be met for a land-use change to have a countywide impact can be found here: [Countywide Plan Map Amendment Application Guide](#)

In addition to the statistics listed above, it was also important to look at what types of land-use changes were occurring countywide, versus just within the equity emphasis areas. The figure below looks at land-use types that have occurred because of development and redevelopment across Pinellas County and within the equity emphasis areas in order to further illustrate changes within each of these areas over the past 5 years.

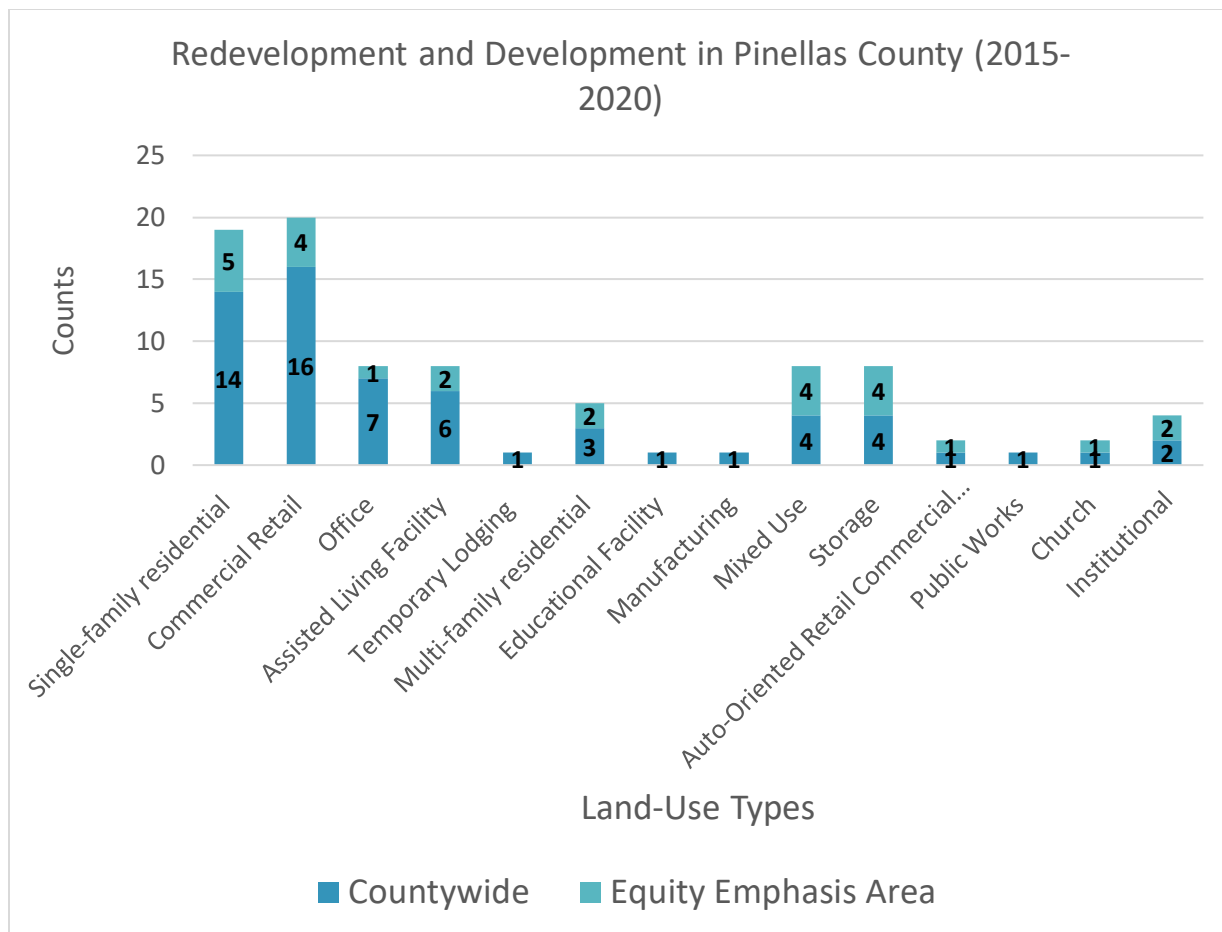


Figure 10: Graph of Development/Redevelopment Land Use Types

Based on these results we've found that at a countywide level there are serious deficiencies within the equity emphasis areas as it is related to single-family residential, commercial retail, and office facilities when compared with the county as a whole. This can be an issue since access to meaningful resources such as grocery stores, clothing stores, etc. are often found within the commercial retail category. Lack of access to these facilities can not only be detrimental to the residents within these communities, but it also creates a need to drive greater distances to access these resources and in turn puts greater stress on roadway infrastructure, and the transportation disadvantaged. Single-family residential can also be important for providing mixed housing options within communities, and office uses are typically associated with higher paying jobs. Currently 97.8% of vacant residential land that could be used to develop more housing options countywide, fall outside of an equity emphasis area. Similarly, roughly 74.3% of vacant retail land is outside of an equity emphasis area, whereas roughly 25.7% is within an equity emphasis area. Forward Pinellas should explore reasons for why market forces are moving these land-use types out of these equity emphasis areas, and how to encourage more of these uses within them.

In addition to the information presented above, all of the countywide land-use changes involving storage facilities have occurred within the equity emphasis areas from 2015 to 2020. These types of changes can be less desirable given the large land areas and small employment opportunity offered by storage facilities in a county with limited land for development and redevelopment. However, upon further research into these storage related cases many of these facilities were already being used in some sort of storage capacity. It is promising to see all of the mixed-use facility development and redevelopment within the equity emphasis areas, as these land-uses maximize the use of the land they reside on, as well as the fact that some of the multi-family redevelopment has included a future affordable housing development. Forward Pinellas should continue to encourage this type of development and redevelopment within these areas, as well as work to expand land-use types associated with higher paying employment of all skill levels.

ANALYZING THE HISTORIC IMPACTS OF REDLINING

For the final part of our analysis, we felt that given our emphasis on looking at land-use trends in equity emphasis areas within Pinellas County within the past five years that it was also important to look at deeper historical trends throughout the County that have led us to where we are today. For this analysis we aimed to look at redlining GIS data provided by the University of Richmond's Digital Scholarship Lab who has been at the forefront of mapping historic redlining in major cities across the nation. With that said the following analysis is based strictly on historic redlining information for the City of St. Petersburg. This is because it is the only city in Pinellas for which this data was available. Similar results and takeaways could be gathered from other cities in Pinellas, however, the data for our other municipalities is not available to us at the time of this documents construction.

This map shows St. Petersburg's historic redlining districts overlaid on top of our equity emphasis areas.

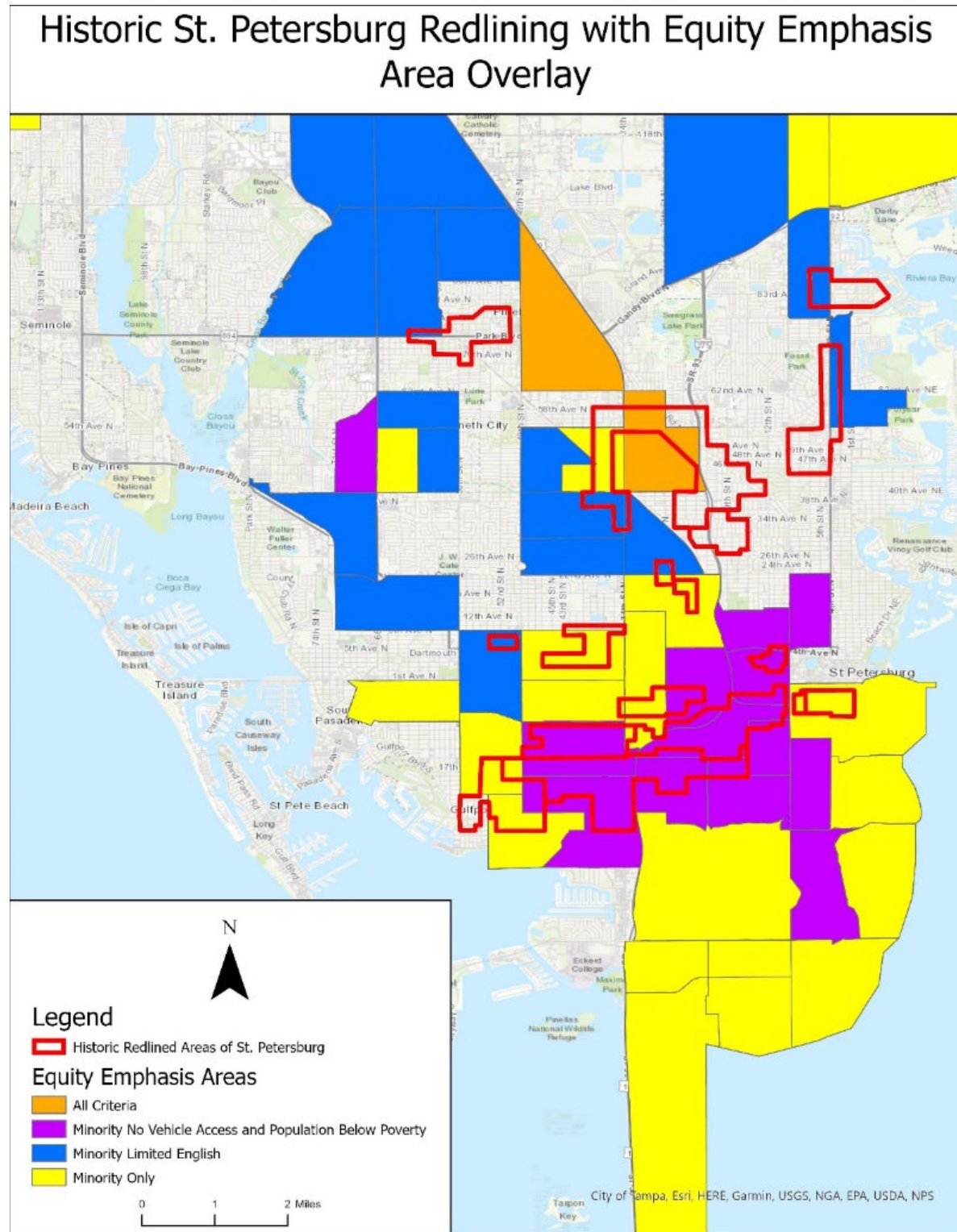


Figure 11: St. Petersburg Historic Redlining

Based on the results in the map shown above, roughly 30.5% of all of the equity emphasis areas at least partially fall within an area that was formerly redlined within the City of St. Petersburg. In addition to this, 60% of the Minority No Vehicle Access and Population Below Poverty areas, which are the primary measure of population below poverty and transportation access within the newly defined equity emphasis areas, fall within the formerly heavily redlined South St. Petersburg Area. As the primary transportation and land-use agency within Pinellas County, and based on the prior analyses done in this report analyzing transportation spending and resource allocation throughout the County, it is important that we recognize the historic legacy that redlining has had on communities in terms of stifling access to critical resources that are required for generational economic mobility, hence the presence of continued economic stagnation and transportation uncertainty in areas that were previously defined by post-New Deal redlining practices.

EQUITY ANALYSIS GIS NEXT STEPS

Updating our Data

For the purposes of consistency with Forward Pinellas planning efforts as well as other major planning data sets, the equity emphasis areas will be reevaluated on a two-year cycle to determine if any data sets can be updated with newly available census data. With this said, Forward Pinellas plans to update the equity emphasis areas in their entirety, including reevaluating current metrics and what may or may not be missing from the data set based on experience using the data in other planning efforts, in conjunction with the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update, which takes place every five years and which has historically coincided with our update to our Environmental Justice Report.

Goals and Objectives for Equity Data Sets

With the analysis developed above, it is important that future planning projects incorporate equity in a way that is centered within the project, but also flexible within the needs of the project. The goal of the equity emphasis layers is to provide a means for analyzing equity concerns related to land-use and transportation for a variety of planning analyses. These could include but are not limited to; percentages of project funding that fall within the defined equity areas, percentage of population for a particular project that fall within an equity area, total opportunity for growth and redevelopment within a defined equity area that also fits within and serves that community, etc. These are just some of the ways in which the equity emphasis layers can be flexibly used to assess equity needs and concerns for various projects managed by Forward Pinellas.

Future Equity Analysis Projects

In addition to the work that has already been done, we also want to consider were these equity data sets and others could be used to provide better planning tool kits and informational items for our agency and other local partners. Below is a list of potential projects that have been done by other communities that could be developed for Pinellas County based on our equity data sets and other data sets as well. These projects are organized by tier of intensity, namely intensity as it relates to staff time and project scope.

Tier 1:

- Story map providing education to prevent discrimination and promote inclusivity similar to the work done by the Boston Region MPO:
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/79311cbd08754ac29a8190ef024a49b4>
- Story map focused on visual demonstration of Equity Assessment GIS Findings similar to the Chattanooga TPO Area:
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/f609a74f8e4c48e39dadcee845854d3f>
Equity Through Access - opportunity analysis using GIS similar to the work done by DVRPC:
<https://dvrpcgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=06eab792a06044f89b5b7fadeef660ba>

Tier 2:

- A regional equity tool similar to the work done by the Houston-Galveston Area Council that uses an Interactive mapping application/tool that identifies the region's vulnerable, low to moderate income population, and historic settlements: <https://hgac.com/interactive-web-applications>

Tier 3:

- Equity Atlas – a GIS based assessment of transit existing service and projected future service similar to the work done by MileHighConnects: <http://milehighconnects.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Denver-Regional-Equity-Atlas-v1.pdf>
- GIS based health equity assessment for specific neighborhoods which helps to create a nexus between health and opportunity with particular focus on land-use and transportation, similar to the work done by the Healthy Capital District Initiative: http://www.hcdiny.org/content/sites/hcdi/equity_reports/Capital_Region_Neighborhood_Health_Equity_Report.pdf
- The development of a Disparate Impact Analysis similar to the work done by the Boston Region MPO: <https://www.ctps.org/data/pdf/programs/equity/2020-Disparate-Impact-Metrics-Analysis-Memo.pdf>
- Access to Opportunity GIS analysis similar to the work done by The San Francisco Foundation in and The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity: http://www.kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/reports/2012/04_2012_SFBayAreaOpportunityMapping.pdf

All of the above listed projects could be implemented in a similar fashion and adjusted for Pinellas County and/or the Tampa Bay region. Depending on the level of intensity, this work would likely require the inclusion of various partner groups and stakeholders, as well as the incorporation of consultant groups with particular expertise in these key areas of interest.

Section 3: Equity Area Outreach

PURPOSE

The purpose of the outreach component of the equity assessment was to gain direct feedback from members of the community on the equity conditions being observed by Pinellas County residents. Our intention was to elicit feedback from members of all the diverse communities who live in Pinellas County. Feedback from individual residents is an essential component of this assessment as it helps to contextualize and legitimize the rest of the data being collected through the equity assessment. The trends noted from the outreach portion of the equity assessment provided important grounding for the geographic and quantitative data analyzed by Forward Pinellas. While this data is important as a means of starting conversations, nothing can replace the real-life stories of citizens who experience inequitable conditions on a daily basis. We used a variety of methods to obtain feedback from Pinellas County Residents. Two focus groups were held at St. Petersburg College and an equity survey was distributed throughout the county. We used existing partnerships that Forward Pinellas has with advocacy organizations and worked to establish new partnerships with advocacy and community organizations to attempt to increase the survey response rate. Ultimately, we received survey feedback from around 465 residents. We also held listening sessions with advocacy groups where targeted discussion prompts were presented to encourage communication of concerns specific to the represented communities.

LISTENING SESSIONS

Purpose and Overview:

The initiation of the Equity Assessment was based on the process of engaging local equity experts to request their assistance in the development of the project scope of work while simultaneously staff conducted extensive literature review on equity practices and related studies on a national scale. **Early in the Equity Assessment, the literature review provided profound awareness regarding the power structures in place which govern decision-making on all levels of government and the need to seek guidance from historically excluded communities.** The Government Alliance on Race and Equity has published multiple resources for government agencies to utilize when working towards increasing equity and inclusion in all aspects of operations. Forward Pinellas quickly realized that in order to promote racial inclusion and engagement, it is essential a new approach to public collaboration was needed. As a result, the agency utilized the direction of UNITE Pinellas to seek sources of new relationships to assist staff internally with education as develop the assessment overall objectives. In January 2021, Forward Pinellas created a stakeholder database and held either one-on-one listening sessions or specific outreach events with the following:

- Unite Pinellas
- Equality Florida
- Foundation for A Healthy St. Petersburg
- Center for Health Equity
- The Deuces Live, Inc.
- Pinellas County
- Florida Department of Health

- Suncoast YMCA
- Tarpon Springs Junior Spongers
- St. Petersburg College
- St. Pete Youth Farm
- Hispanic Outreach Center

Process

In order to initiate the “level setting” process of generating new leadership opportunities for historically excluded communities, Forward Pinellas developed meetings to gauge direction from equity experts and those most affected by systematic racism. Albeit this is only a start, these listening sessions provided the direction for the entire equity assessment. **In order to initiate structural change, these cross-disciplinary partnerships will be continued as vital components of the agency stakeholder engagement processes.** Based on literature, a series of specific questions involving equity, inclusion, racism, opportunity, and need were organized and utilized for the listening sessions. Below is a sample of some of the questions and data utilized for these discussions:

Equity Assessment Questions for Listening Sessions		
<i>Racial equity is realized when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes, and outcomes for all groups are improved.</i>		
Source	Question	Associated Content
2020 Regional Equity Report	It is our objective to learn about systemic racism, its causes and its implications here in Pinellas County. For example, the 2020 Regional Equity Report found that black children in Tampa Bay are almost three times as likely to be living in poverty compared to whites. What do you believe are the biggest factors which have led to these inequitable conditions for people of color in Pinellas County? What are the underlying root causes?	<i>Data demonstrated severe inequalities for black and Hispanic residents compared to whites. What are the historical causes and currently biggest challenges.</i>
Racial Equity Alliance	What factors contribute to existing barriers for people of color to access jobs, education, food, health care and other necessities? Are there transportation barriers and if so, what are they? Are there land use barriers and if so, what are they?	<i>Factors that contribute to transportation disadvantaged includes: low income, non-driver, car-less, disability, language barriers, isolation, caregiver (responsible for dependent or disabled adult), obligations. This is multi-dimensional and should take into account the degree and number of factors</i>
Racial Equity	Communities of color have different life experiences relating to institutional racism, how do we identify and involve a wide range of people?	<i>The vision should be heavily informed by communities of color impacted by institutional and structural racism - those with the real expertise.</i>
Racial Equity Alliance	One of our main goals is to develop long-term relationships with communities of color and create a space to listen and learn how we can resource their ideas. We recognize that inequality and racism has been rooted in public policy and that governments are thereby may not have been trusted. What can we do to engage communities of color and build trust?	<i>Community Engagement and Empowerment Policies: 1. Institute principles of effective community engagement and use targeted community strategies; implement principals of participatory planning; build trust through outreach (this is a long-term relationship and process not just 1 event); create space to listen and heal old wounds; avoid duplication of engagement efforts.</i>
Racial Equity Alliance	Robust community engagement is critical, what forms of communication should we consider to solicit partnerships?	<i>Community Engagement and Empowerment Policies: 1. Institute principles of effective community engagement and use targeted community strategies; implement principals of participatory planning; build trust through outreach (this is a long-term relationship and process not just 1 event); create space to listen and heal old wounds; avoid duplication of engagement efforts.</i>
UNITE Pinellas	What can we do to support community awareness of current inequality conditions here in Pinellas County?	<i>Continual public education and awareness.</i>

Table 1: Equity Assessment Questions

Results

The experiential data from the listening sessions resulted in several insightful stories and overall similar concepts regarding the historical and current challenges for racial minorities. The feedback was utilized to develop the three-tier data collection process involving experiential, internal and external data; as well as expanding the assessment to include an internal audit of agency impact. The scope of work was finalized based on the listening session feedback.

Furthermore, the main themes from the listening session were documented to ensure the agency outreach and internal/external evaluations considered the relevant equity factors. The main themes are listed below and identified in the word cloud:

- Lack of opportunities
 - Not a lack of willingness or competency
- Limited access to work and education
- Lack of affordable housing
- Safety concerns while using the active transportation and public transportation network
- Mental health needs for school-aged children
- Food insecurity



Figure 12: Listening Session Word Cloud

EQUITY SURVEY

An equity survey was distributed around Pinellas County to get direct feedback from residents about equity conditions in their communities. This survey was distributed through appearances at community outreach events and some of the advocacy organizations that partner with Forward Pinellas. In total, we received 467 responses from all census ethnicities that reside in Pinellas County. The ethnicity and gender profiles of survey

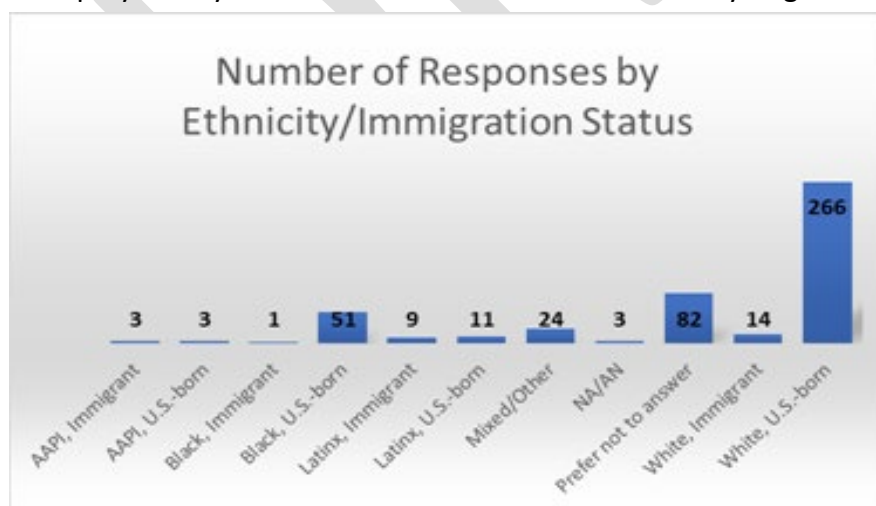


Figure 13: Equity Survey Responses by Race
(AAPI-Asian American/Pacific Islander; NA/AN-Native American/Alaska Native)

respondents are shown below. We also received responses from all areas of the county.

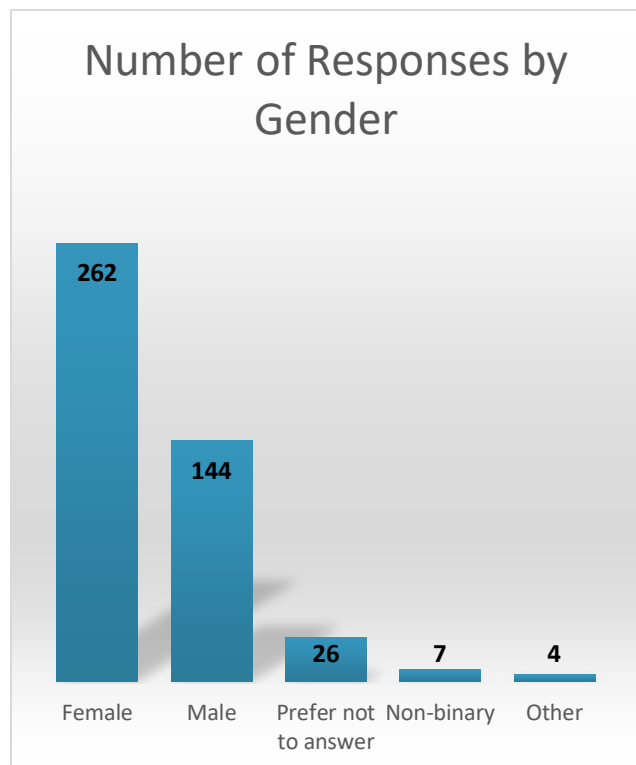


Figure 14: Equity Survey Responses by Gender

Location in Pinellas County	
Belleair	3
Belleair Beach	1
Belleair Bluffs	3
Clearwater	61
Dunedin	22
Gulfport	9
Indian Rocks Beach	1
Kenneth City	2
Largo	45
Madeira Beach	2
Oldsmar	6
Pinellas Park	27
Redington Beach	2
Redington Shores	1
Safety Harbor	12
Seminole	24
St. Pete Beach	11
St. Petersburg	139
Treasure Island	6
Tarpon Springs	11
Unincorporated	39

Table 2: Equity Survey Responses by Residence

The survey asked participants how difficult it was to get to various common locations within Pinellas County. This includes work, school, grocery stores, and healthcare. Responses from these questions are summarized by percent in the graphs below.

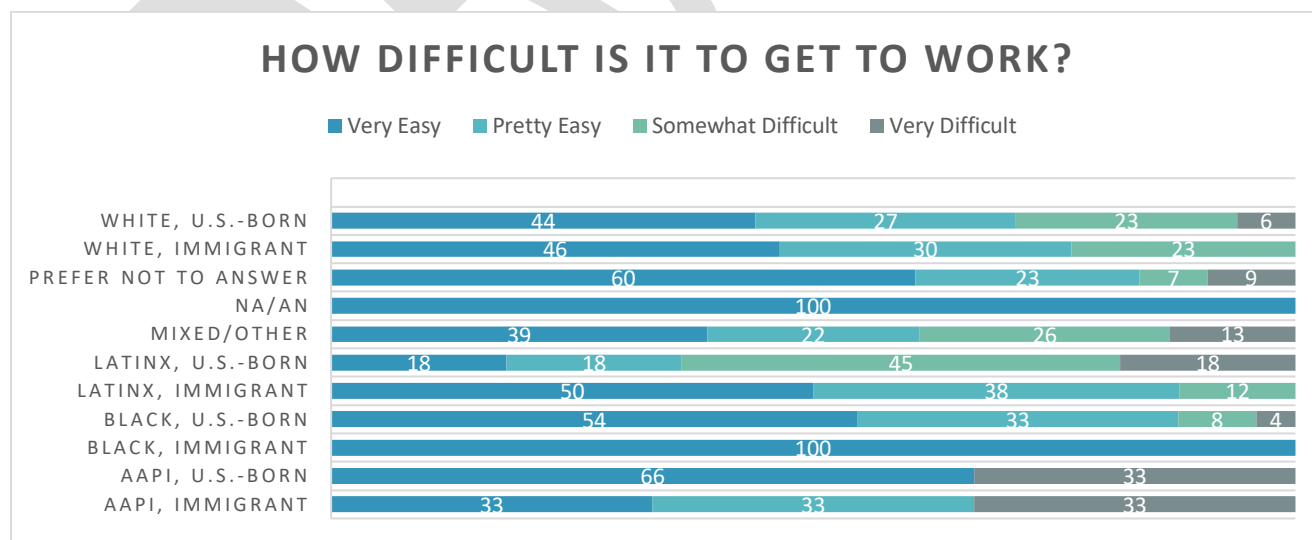


Figure 15: Difficulty getting to work

Overall, the graph shows that a significant percentage of respondents who are white, mixed race, Latinx, and Asian American/Pacific Islander have at least some difficulty getting to work. All groups except Native America/Alaska Natives reported some difficulty getting to work.

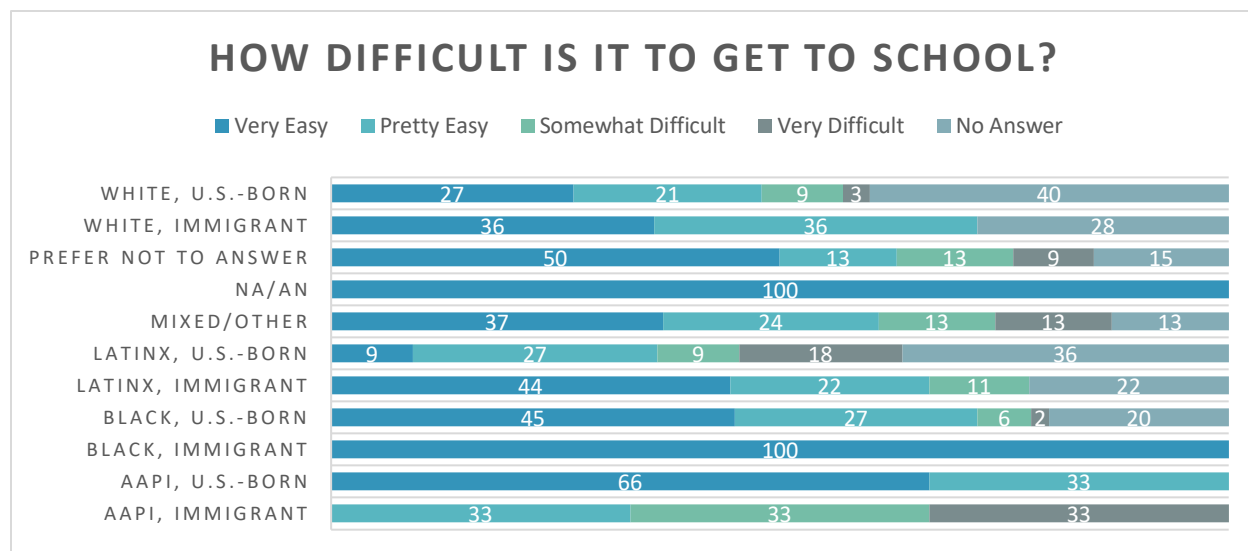


Figure 16: Difficulty getting to school

For school, there were many respondents who don't travel for educational purposes on a regular basis, making this category not applicable for those residents. For those who do travel to school, all groups indicated some difficulty getting to school except Native America/Alaska Natives, black immigrants, and white immigrants. The groups of highest concern for this category are mixed race and Asian American/Pacific Islander.

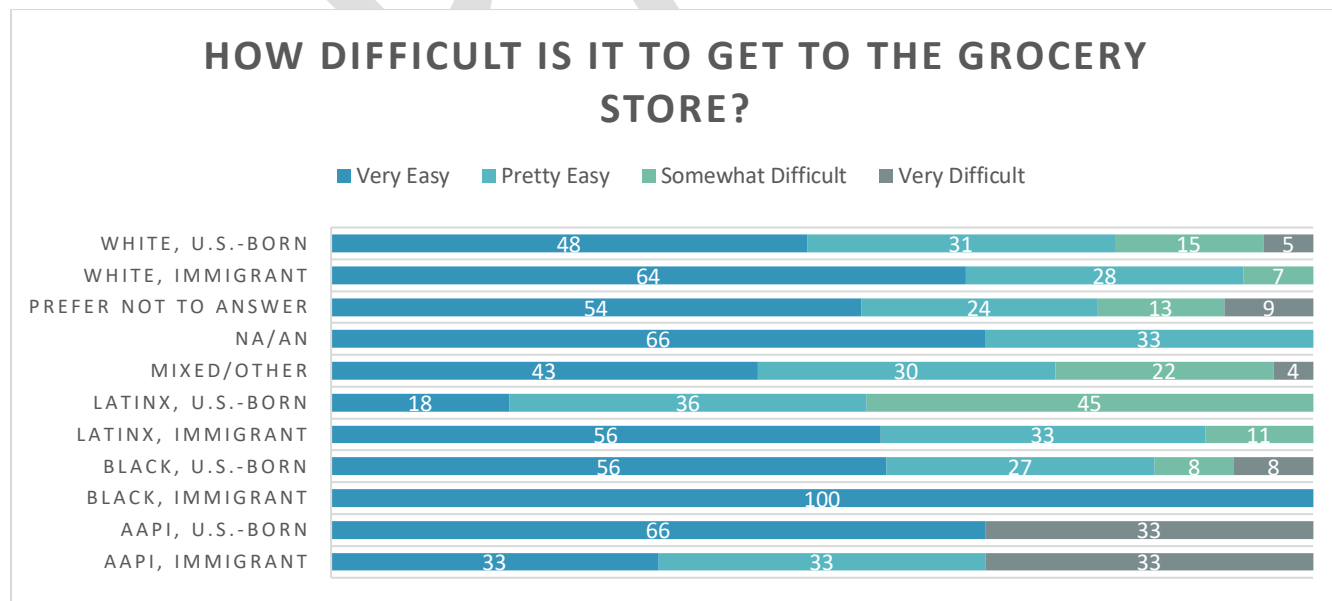


Figure 17: Difficulty getting to grocery store

Survey results for ease of access to the grocery store indicate some difficulty for all ethnic groups surveyed. US-born Latinxs, mixed race individuals, and Asian American/Pacific Islanders were the groups with the highest level of concern.

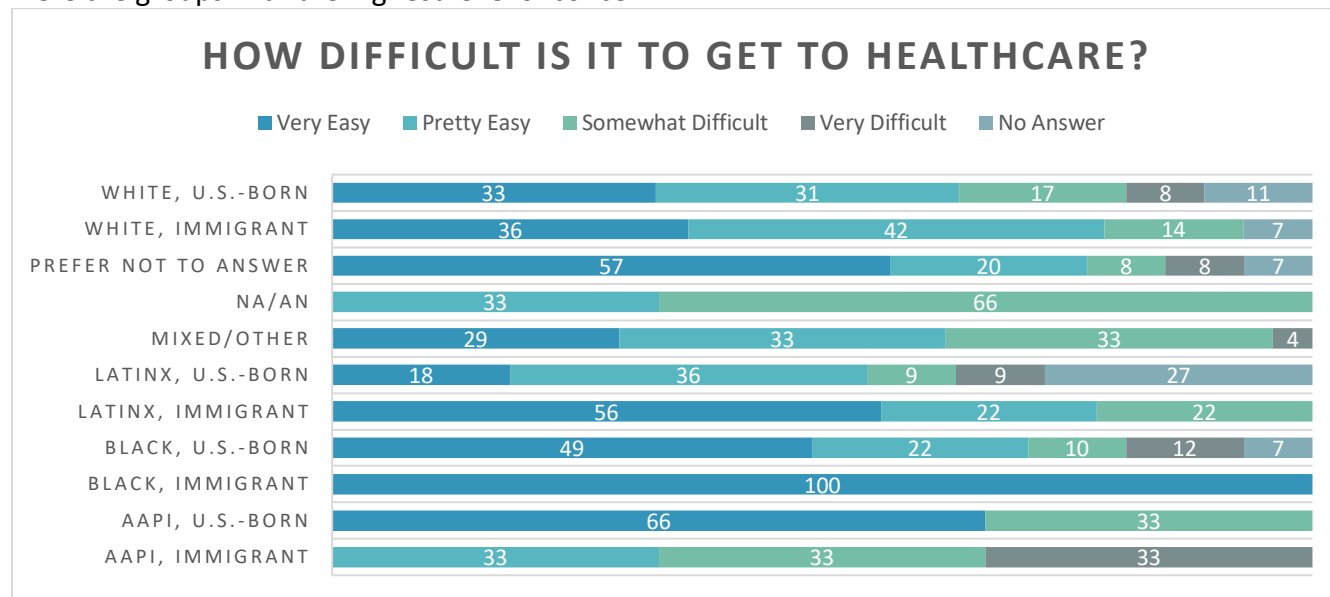


Figure 18: Difficulty accessing healthcare

All ethnic groups indicated at least some difficulty accessing healthcare, with a few respondents choosing not to answer, indicating a possibility that some are not accessing healthcare at all. The groups of highest concern in this category are Asian American/Pacific Islander immigrants, Native America/Alaska Natives, mixed race, and Latinxs.

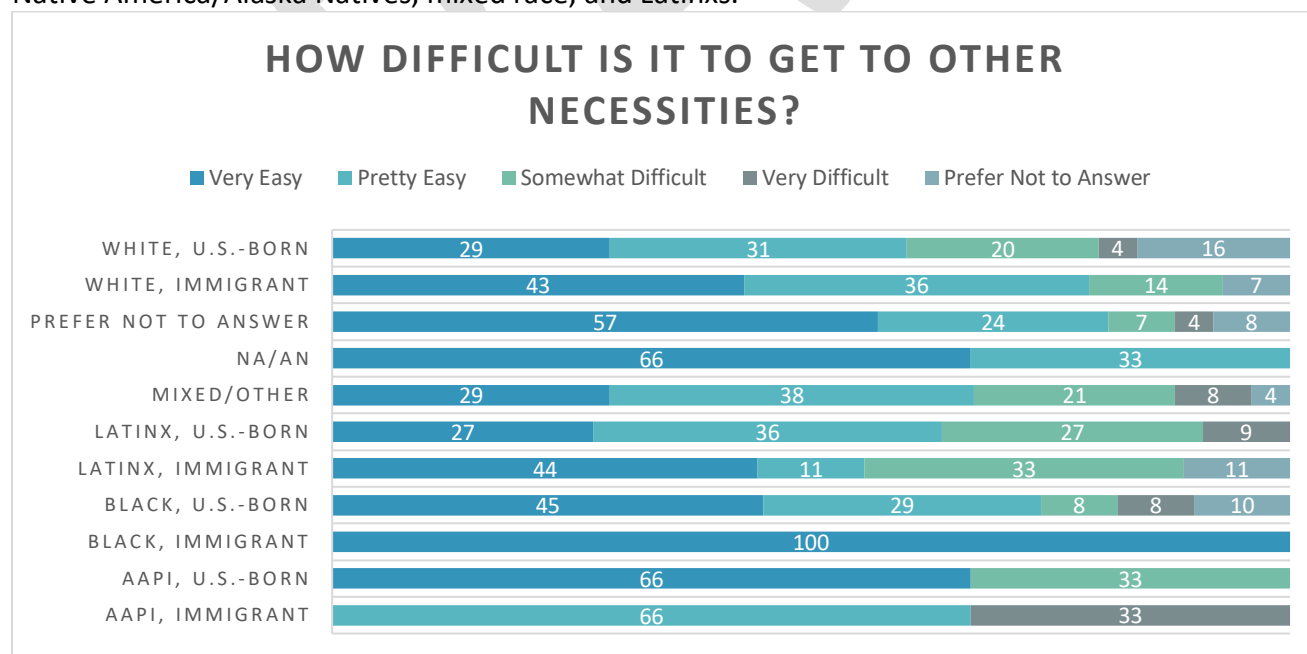


Figure 19: Difficulty accessing necessities

This graph shows at least some difficulty accessing other necessities in all groups except black immigrants. The groups of highest concern for this category are mixed race, Latinx, and Asian American/Pacific Islanders.

The survey asked respondents what their primary mode of transportation is. We received a wide variety of responses including car, bicycle, bus, rideshare, rides from friends, and walking. Overall, 398 of 467 (85%) respondents indicated that they used a car as a primary method of transportation. The graph below shows the percentage of respondents in each ethnic category who did not indicate that they used a car as a primary method of transportation.

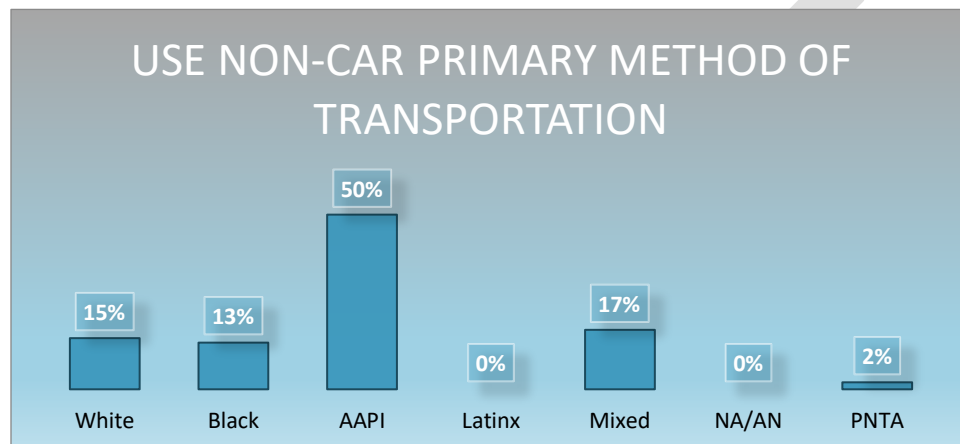


Figure 20: Non-car primary mode of transportation

Half of Asian American/Pacific Islanders who responded to the survey did not indicate using a car as a primary mode of transportation. Mixed race

respondents also had a notable rate of non-car transportation methods. Native American/Alaska Natives and Latinxs all indicated that they use a car as a primary mode of transportation. When asked why some chose not to use a car, common responses include the following:

- I'm disabled and can't operate a car.
- Public transport is easier to use
- Owning a car is too expensive
- I enjoy walking and cycling.

The survey asked if respondents were at risk of losing their homes due to rising cost of rents. In total, 13% of respondents indicated that this was a concern for them. Response percentages by ethnicity are indicated below.

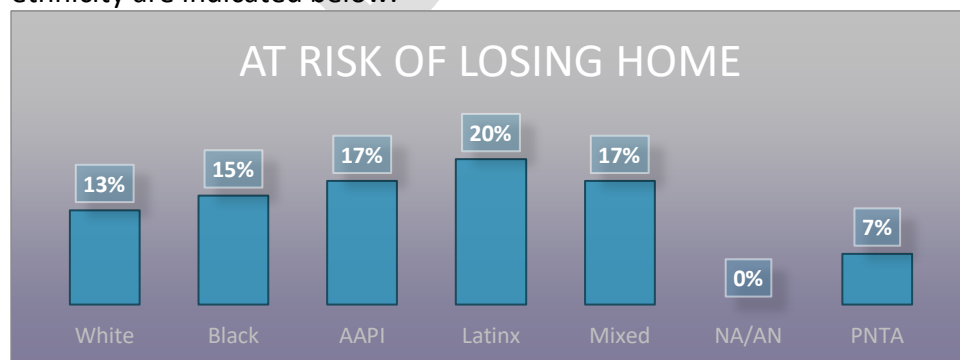


Figure 21: At risk of losing home

Notable percentages of all ethnic groups indicated that losing their home was a concern.

Latinxs stood out with 1/5 of respondents from this category indicating the possibility of losing their home.

The next section of the survey asked how awareness of inequality conditions can be increased in Pinellas County. 220 respondents did not answer this question. Similar responses were grouped into categories. A summary of the categories is as follows:

- Agency Self-Assessment-Government agencies should examine their own practices to determine how their practices affect equity conditions in the county.
- Appropriation of Funds-Government agencies should examine how they use their funds and consider equity conditions as they appropriate funds.
- Community Organization-increase activity in the community to get messages about inequality conditions out to the public.
- Data Communication-Communicate the results of studies and data collection to the community.
- Media-use radio, television, social media, neighborhood flyers, and other mass communication methods to spread messages to Pinellas residents.
- Events-hold events and appear at community fairs to communicate messages and results of studies.
- Legislation-pass ordinances that will increase equity and the awareness of unequal conditions.
- Listening Sessions-hold listening sessions with community and advocacy groups to gain a better understanding of equity conditions at the neighborhood level.
- Presentations to elected officials-present equity data and studies to elected officials and decision makers to help increase their understanding of the effects their decisions have on equity conditions.

The survey asked respondents what equity would look like in their communities if it were achieved. 205 responses were recorded. Similar responses were grouped into categories, which are listed below:

- Social Changes-equity conditions won't be realized without social and cultural changes.
- Safety-improved policing, lower crime
- Mobility-improved transportation options and reduction in traffic
- Housing-more affordable housing needed; rents rising fast, pricing many out of homes.
- Beautification-work on beautification projects around the county
- Healthcare-improve access to affordable healthcare
- Employment-improve access to well-paying jobs
- Resource Access-general comments about improving access to necessities and community amenities.
- Education-improve educational quality and access.
- Food Access-Need for quality food access in all neighborhoods.
- Equal Opportunity-general comments about need for equal opportunity regardless of race, neighborhood, or other demographic characteristics.
- Governmental Changes-government needs to change structure or funding patterns.

The final section of the survey asked respondents to identify ways that government officials and agencies can make community voices heard and directly address concerns. Common responses included holding virtual meetings at a variety of times, using social media, increase internet access, and give presentations at churches and schools.

FOCUS GROUPS SUMMARY

Two focus groups were held at St. Petersburg College. The first was moderated by Rodney Chatman, a black male manager with Forward Pinellas, with 3 black male student participants. The second was moderated by Nousheen Rahman, a Bengali American female planner at Forward Pinellas, with 6 female students of various races. Both moderators had prepared questions, however these were used more as conversation starters and the discussions were allowed and encouraged to move organically rather than be limited to the prepared questions.

The themes that dominated the discussions of both focus groups were transportation, affordable housing, employment opportunities, access to opportunities and necessities, and government outreach and prioritization practices.

In the area of transportation, several concerns were raised by participants from both focus groups. Participants indicated that one must own a car in Pinellas County to access the full range of opportunities, amenities, and necessities available in the county. Some indicated that they did not want to drive and would use public transport options if they were available and an efficient means of transportation. However, participants indicated that these options were very limited and, when available, were inefficient and sometimes unclear or unsafe. Participants told stories of their experiences on the Pinellas-Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) vehicles. These stories indicated that this was not a time efficient method of travel, often taking much longer than driving to access amenities. It was also indicated that this was not a reliable method of travel to work as using PSTA would often result in late arrival. Participants suggested increases in frequency, bus stop coverage, and cleanliness to increase ridership and effectiveness of the current PSTA services, particularly in the face of currently rising gas prices and overall costs of car ownership. Another recommendation was to improve trail infrastructure to increase the possibility of cycling as a means of efficient transportation. A final transportation theme from the discussions was how the lack of transportation options limits employment opportunities for those without access to a reliable car. Even with a car, transportation costs made it difficult to justify driving to a low wage job. Participants recommended investing in a reliable and efficient public transport network to increase opportunities for employment for those in low-income neighborhoods.

The next major theme from the discussions was affordable housing. All participants, with diverse age and racial backgrounds, agreed that the cost of purchasing or renting a home was high and steadily increasing. Several indicated that they were at risk of being displaced from their homes due to high housing costs and gentrification of their neighborhood, specifically in South St. Petersburg. Additionally, many indicated that, upon losing their homes, they would have nowhere to go due to lack of affordable housing options and may be forced to leave

Pinellas County. When asked about access to affordable housing resources, a few respondents indicated that they knew there were programs available to assist with finding housing, but that these were difficult to access and follow through with. Finally, there was discussion that low-income communities are becoming increasingly isolated from necessities, opportunities, and community amenities due to rising housing costs.

There were brief discussions about employment concerns in both focus groups. Both groups of participants expressed the need for more well-paying jobs. It was indicated that, while no one had difficulty finding a job, many could only find low-paying service jobs which made it difficult to support a family or improve economic circumstances. One participant indicated that she had to work 2 jobs in order to afford housing, food, and transportation costs and this left her little time or energy to spend with her children. Participants indicated that improvements in public transportation infrastructure would improve opportunities for finding better-paying jobs which would reduce the need to work long hours and improve work-life balance.

The final topic of discussion dealt with government outreach and prioritization. Many indicated that, in low-income neighborhoods, people have little access to or experience with their local government representatives and did not know how to make their needs heard by those who appropriate funding. Participants suggested increasing government presence of both elected and non-elected officials in low-income and minority neighborhoods to act as a conduit through which people could make their voices heard. Additionally, more public outreach in low-income and minority neighborhoods would increase awareness of and access to government programs that are intended to help residents of these communities. Another suggestion for those who appropriate funds was to increase investment in known low-income and minority communities as these are the areas where investment of public funds is likely to have the most impact. Finally, participants indicated that social media was an important method for reaching out to low-income and minority communities.

SUMMARY OF OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The outreach portion of this equity assessment was comprised of listening sessions, a survey, and two focus groups. Through these activities we were able to directly hear the concerns of community members and advocacy groups regarding equity conditions in Pinellas County. We heard a wide variety of concerns that have been summarized in the previous sections. Principal concerns from county residents include limited transportation options, lack of affordable housing, lack of access to education and healthcare, lack of access to healthy food, and lack of well-paying jobs. We also heard concerns about lack of representation in government. Many respondents indicated that they didn't feel their community was represented in elected and nonelected government agencies and that diversifying county employees would help begin discussions about inequitable conditions in certain neighborhoods around Pinellas County. While Forward Pinellas is not directly responsible for addressing all of the concerns heard through our outreach, we can partner with other governmental agencies and community advocacy organizations to work toward addressing a variety of equity concerns throughout the county.

Section 4: Forward Pinellas Work Products Evaluation

PURPOSE

As part of this Equity Assessment, Forward Pinellas staff have also evaluated our existing work products for equity considerations. The purpose of this is to examine the ways in which ongoing work has already incorporated equity in its progression and also critically evaluate the ways in which these products can better incorporate equity in their future progress. As the agency's range of projects vary greatly, each of our work products were evaluated against a checklist. Rather than serving as a list that each work product must meet the criteria of in its entirety, the checklist was used as an evaluation for considering the relevant equity considerations to each project, and the extent to which these are met. The checklist includes the following criteria:

- Overall social equity
- Social equity outreach efforts (especially within historically excluded communities)
- Employment opportunity and accessibility
- Degree of safety and security
- Access to food
- Medical services
- Education options, access, and quality
- Goods movement and access
- Air quality & climate change resiliency
- Availability of cultural & environmental resources
- Access to and quality of parks
- Access to libraries
- Mobility options and ability
- Network connectivity
- Congestion
- Multimodal access
- Overall consideration of structural and social impacts to disadvantaged communities due to historically racist policies and practices

INTERNAL REVIEWS

Gateway Master Plan

Background

The master plan for the Gateway area focuses on building partnerships to guide future development and multimodal connectivity, both regionally and throughout the district. The plan serves as a guide for public and private investment and decision making in the Gateway area. The Master Plan includes a detailed plan for phasing and implementation addressing changes to policy, regulations, and potential partnerships for implementation, such as priority capital projects.

The Gateway area includes 30 square miles of land, spanning across multiple jurisdictions including Pinellas Park, Largo, St. Petersburg and unincorporated Pinellas County. The area includes a range of household incomes, which fall squarely in the middle of Countywide incomes and are comparable to the surrounding municipalities. However, within this area, there are pockets of poverty lacking equitable access to reliable transportation, quality affordable housing and services, namely, the Highpoint neighborhood.

Equity Considerations

Overall Social Equity and Outreach Efforts

The entirety of the Gateway Master Plan seeks to identify areas of opportunity for improved quality of life through access to jobs, education, affordable housing, recreation, greenspace, and additionally identifies network connectivity improvements which could contribute to these improvements. The outreach efforts for this master planning process included media outlets, flyers, and postcards for target residential areas. The targeted residential areas intentionally included traditionally underserved and historically excluded areas, such as the High Point neighborhood, mobile home parks and senior living facilities.

Analysis of Equity Considerations

Overall, the Gateway Master Plan addresses numerous equity considerations outlined by Forward Pinellas. Employment opportunities are considered extensively through the various catalyst areas outlined in the plan, which are also identified communities of concern within the county. Additionally, safety and security are heavily considered through suggested roadway and infrastructure improvements in the various catalyst areas of the plan. These suggestions also consider options for improvements which would encourage residents to be less car dependent, and thereby address factors of congestion and multimodal transportation options.

One of the equity considerations which has been identified as an area of improvement for the Gateway Master Plan is access to medical services. The Gateway considers access to food, education, and other important resources in its targeted areas. However, access to medical services is not a direct consideration outlined in the Master Plan. As the implementation process progresses for this plan, access to medical resources is encouraged to be considered in the outcomes of the Gateway Master Plan.

Forward Pinellas will continue to monitor the performance standards of equitable outcomes from the Gateway Master Plan, such as the number of bike lanes in the area, as the Plan continues to implement continual strategies for improved opportunities in the area over time. The Gateway Master Plan, along with a performance dashboard which will be used to track progress towards implementation, can be found at the following link: <https://forwardpinellas.org/projectsdashboard/gateway-master-plan/>.

Advantage Pinellas Housing Compact

Background

The Advantage Pinellas Housing Compact is a multi-jurisdictional effort, led by Pinellas County Housing and Community Development and Forward Pinellas, which aims to increase affordable housing linked to transportation, jobs, schools, workforce development, and other services. The Housing Compact is part of the Advantage Pinellas plan to address long-term, countywide needs for transportation, jobs, and housing. The Compact is adopted by Pinellas County, Forward Pinellas and the four largest municipalities in the county, followed by outreach to the remaining municipalities, as well as other agencies. The Housing Compact specifically recognizes that Pinellas County will need an increase of nearly 1,000 affordable housing units per year this decade to keep with the pace of population growth.

Equity Considerations

Overall Social Equity and Outreach Efforts

The crux of the Housing Compact is to allow residents to have better opportunities to not only find affordable housing, but also participate in the workforce, obtain an education, and meet their daily needs in order to lead a healthy and fulfilling life. The Compact recognizes that nearly one in five households in Pinellas County is cost-burdened (spending more than 30 percent of its income on housing) and that lower-income, minority and elderly residents are disproportionately likely to live in these households. A resolution of the Housing Compact is that the involved partners agree to work towards addressing racial, social, economic, and geographic inequalities in their provision of affordable housing throughout Pinellas County.

Analysis of Equity Considerations

The Advantage Pinellas Housing Compact touches upon many equity considerations. First and foremost, the Housing Compact recognizes that economic opportunity, in part, depends on residents being able to find affordable housing, and that employers can better attract and retain a stable workforce when residents can find quality affordable housing close to their workplaces. Furthermore, the Housing Compact recognizes that access to stable, affordable housing also impacts residents' abilities to obtain an education, and as well as access to parks and recreational resources, bicycle/pedestrian facilities, healthy food sources, and medical care providers.

As housing costs in Pinellas County are rising significantly faster than household incomes, it is important to consider which communities are in greater need of stable, affordable housing. While the Housing Compact acknowledges the populations that are disproportionately likely to be rent-burdened, an area of improvement identified through this equity analysis is the outreach conducted to these groups. The Housing Compact in its early stages, involved mostly government agencies.

However, part of the efforts of this Compact in its implementation will be to work with not only affordable housing developers, but also community groups and citizens who will be impacted by and benefit from affordable housing opportunities. The efforts implemented by this Compact will

be tracked through a centralized data repository and performance metrics that is to be developed at the time of writing this analysis. Furthermore, a joint communications and outreach program will be created, which will include a website that serves as an information portal for residents, local businesses, developers, and non-profit community organizations involved in the implementation of the action plans for this Housing Compact.

Currently, information on the Advantage Pinellas Housing Compact can be found at the following webpage: <https://www.homesforpinellas.org/compact/>.

Transportation Disadvantaged Program

Background

The Pinellas County Transportation Disadvantaged Program (TD Program) is a state-funded program that provides reduced cost transportation throughout the county to individuals who qualify as “Transportation Disadvantaged.” While mainly overseen by Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) in its role as the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) for Pinellas County, Forward Pinellas is the Designed Official Planning Agency for the TD Program in the county. Within Forward Pinellas, the Local Coordinating Board is responsible for overseeing PSTA in their role as the CTC for Pinellas County. TD Program services include discounted bus passes, or non-emergency door-to-door services provided by taxi cabs or wheelchair accessible vans for those unable to ride the bus.

Equity Considerations

Overall Social Equity and Outreach Efforts

The purpose of the TD Program is to provide for discounted transportation access to the transportation disadvantaged, which may include the elderly, disabled and those living below poverty. As part of the development of this program, a survey was developed and made available online, with the primary audience being human service agencies. However, the survey was also made available to TD program participants, family of participants and others involved with potential TD populations.

Analysis of Equity Considerations

The Transportation Disadvantaged Program touches upon multiple equity considerations, one including access to employment and education opportunities. An identified goal of the program is to locate bus stops near common destinations for the transportation disadvantaged, including major employers, education institutions, social service agencies, medical facilities, and housing. Furthermore, the TD program considers mobility options and ability by including goals to incrementally expand transit service, and increase public transit access. Additionally safety and security are considered through the requirement of a System Safety Program for all providers, operators, and coordination contractors, in accordance with Florida Statutes and Florida Administrative Code.

One of the qualitative observations of this equity assessment is the inability of some communities to have adequate transportation access to food resources. While it is not a direct, identified goal of the TD program to provide better access to food resources, better access to transportation could inherently better this access. However, this is an area of improvement for the TD program, potentially to incorporate food sources as a common destination in considerations of bus stop placement.

Information on the Transportation Disadvantaged Program can be found at the following link: <https://forwardpinellas.org/programs/transportation-disadvantaged-td-program/>.

Long Range Transportation Plan, “Advantage Pinellas”

Background

The Long Transportation Plan (LRTP) is a strategic plan to improve communities throughout all of Pinellas County and make them safer and more equitable for everyone. As described in **Section 2** of this report, the MPO role conducted by Forward Pinellas involves the development of federally mandated transportation plans to ensure federal funds support local priorities. The LRTP is one of these mandates which is updated every five years and includes new data and analysis based on outreach with the public and coordination with local, state, and federal agencies. Forward Pinellas in its role as an MPO develops the LRTP through collaboration with the public and local governments. The plan identifies and prioritizes transportation projects on a 25-year scale, which high-priority and near-term projects are added to yearly FDOT Work Program as part of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The most recent LRTP, the Advantage Pinellas LRTP, finalized in 2020 focused on improving mobility, economic opportunity, and housing affordability countywide. Due to public feedback, this plan increased funding for new bike and pedestrian facilities, widening roads, expanding infrastructure, and improving transit. Furthermore, the plan prioritized the integration of land use and transportation policy as part of the project selection process and focused on improvement to core transportation corridors which enhance connectivity and increase resiliency. An integral consideration in developing the Advantage Pinellas LRTP was the recognition of the diverse and distinct communities in Pinellas County and connected these communities to industries and jobs.

Overall Equity Considerations

The Advantage Pinellas LRTP prioritized equity as a primary consideration in all aspects of the analysis, outreach processes, and plan implementation strategies. The entirety of this plan was focused on the need to connect people to jobs and other necessities, as well as expand access to affordable housing for low-income residents in Pinellas County. The development of the Advantage Pinellas LRTP focused on the understanding that lack of transportation is one of the primary reasons low-income households are unable to participate in the growing economy. The report explained that in Pinellas County many higher wage jobs are located mid-county resulting in difficulty for workers in the southern and northern portions of the county to access these jobs without owning a vehicle. Furthermore, low-wage hospitality jobs which are commonly held by economically disadvantaged workers are concentrated in beach

communities where housing is expensive which requires long commutes by workers from other parts of the region. The Advantage Pinellas LRTP clearly documented that creating the workforce of the future in Pinellas County requires wise transportation decisions, such as locating housing near commercial and employment land uses which allow biking, walking and transit options. Overall, equity considerations are presented throughout the Advantage Pinellas LRTP, and below are some highlighted strategies, processes, policies, and goals in the plan.

Analysis of Equity Considerations

An essential process in the development of the Advantage Pinellas LRTP was the 2015 Demographic Analysis Report published in May 2018. This robust analysis presents a summary of the Pinellas County population in terms of geographic location, total number and percentage of the population which are identified as Black or African American, Hispanic, or Latino, Asian American, American Indian, and Alaskan Native, Native-Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and low-income. The report is very thorough and used 2011-2015 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates at the census tract level for representing the data. The analyses within the report help to ensure nondiscrimination in federally funded activities by identifying and mitigating any disproportion adverse human health or environmental impact on racial minority and low-income populations. The report resulted in maps depicting the baseline low-income and minority communities. These maps were pivotal in conducting outreach which included low-income and racial minority communities. The Demographic Report maps were used to analyze potential projects for funding through the LRTP to anticipate the community impact and benefits from said projects.

The LRTP conducted a focused effort to engage historically excluded racial communities through outreach and public participation. A multi-faceted approach was utilized to expand the agency reach which included in-person participation at public events, survey, public notification through social media and other outlets, as well as use of a focus group comprised of public participants. During the development of the plan, agency staff conducted over twenty in-person public events which several included neighborhood association meetings, food kitchen distribution events, and various community events all within regions of Pinellas County with higher than average low-income and racial minority neighborhoods. These in-person events were specifically meant to target EJ areas within Pinellas County. Staff handed out free bike lights and informational material at community events as well as engaged the public on their feedback regarding transportation mode choice and feedback on ideas for improvements to the transportation network.

Forward Pinellas held focus group meetings with the public during the outreach for the Advantage Pinellas LRTP. To help ensure the focus group meetings captured a diversity of perspectives, Forward Pinellas sought seven participants each from north county, mid county, and south county areas. These public members participated in three facilitated discussions over the course of one year.

In addition to the in-person outreach, Forward Pinellas conducted a robust public survey whereby Pinellas County residents were mailed a five-page survey. A stratified random survey process was utilized whereby geographic equity was applied to ensure each zip code was represented in the survey. Utilizing the existing EJ data, the survey was sent to wide range of populations to include racial minority and low-income communities. To ensure validity and accuracy of the survey, a consultant conducted the survey and summarized the results. The survey resulted in 844 responses. The feedback included concepts such as 57% of people saying they were willing to exchange slower speeds for safer roads with lower income areas having a higher percentage of preference of higher incomes. Furthermore, the survey found more support for transit funding in EJ zip codes and affordable housing more pressing for lower income groups.

During the development of the LRTP, Forward Pinellas collaborated in the "Tri-County Transportation Plan" Metro Quest survey for the "It's TIME Tampa Bay" planning study. This study was the first tri-county planning initiative involving Pinellas, Pasco, and Hillsborough counties for the 2045 LRTP planning process. The intent of the study was to collaborate on future growth and identify regional mobility needs to provide equitable access for all people to jobs, universities, airports, health care, state parks and beaches. The aforementioned Metro Quest survey provided results from over 9,500 people in the three county region. Forward Pinellas utilized the tri-county public outreach effort to identify county-specific projects that improve regional mobility. Albeit 77% of all survey respondents identified as white in the tri-county area, almost 5% of respondents from Pinellas County identified as Hispanic Latino or Spanish origin and almost 3% identified as black or African American, and nearly 4% identified as "other". The minority group responses were used in conjunction with the Advantage Pinellas LRTP data analysis.

Restrictions in funding due to specific requirements for projects in the LRTP and TIP result in Forward Pinellas advancing projects not entirely based on public need. Due to the LRTP funding process requiring a Cost Feasibility Plan and revenue sources assigning funds for specific project types. For example, there may be projects that provide higher biking and walking opportunities that are less feasible due to land use constraints, or other challenges. Furthermore, the LRTP funding sources are from federal state and county revenue. The details in the revenue sources and restrictions are included in the "Financial Resources Technical Memorandum" located on the Advantage Pinellas website. This report describes how funding is allocated for specific project types, such as highway construction, resulting in limited flexibility to target some monies towards projects needed by the community. Funding inflexibility can result in a gap in meeting public needs as identified through outreach and public participative processes. As such, Forward Pinellas in the Advantage Pinellas LRTP prioritized 100% of the flexible funding resources towards increasing bicycle, pedestrian, technology, and transit projects based on the robust public outreach feedback. Funding was prioritized for bus replacements, regional transit services and future technological improvements and as these projects are refined, forward Pinellas will advance them through the multimodal priority list. The active transportation project prioritization process is further disclosed below in the Active Transportation Plan section.

Forward Pinellas has worked to address gaps in transportation funding types through other program opportunities such as Complete Streets, Transportation Alternatives, and the Transportation Disadvantaged Plan. Forward Pinellas can improve efforts to increase equity in Pinellas County through funding projects which provide meaningful improvements in the lives of people residing in communities identified as, Environmental Justice Emphasis Areas. In **Section 4** of this report, additional analysis, results, and suggested improvements to provide equitable Transportation Improvement Plan funding is fully disclosed.

An essential aspect of the Advantage Pinellas LRTP is the implementation of policies, goals, and objectives. The following examples are instrumental to the Advantage Pinellas LRTP and align with the goal to advance racial equity and inclusion in Pinellas County:

- Objective 5.2 - Provide opportunities to engage citizens, particularly the traditionally underserved populations, in the development of Forward Pinellas plans and programs.
- Policy 5.2.1: Forward Pinellas shall maintain, implement, and evaluate its Public Participation Plan, in accordance with Section 450.316, U.S. Code.
- Policy 5.2.2: Forward Pinellas shall provide public forums for cooperative decision making by local government officials and other agencies with regard to countywide transportation and land use plans, policies, and programs.
- Policy 5.2.3: Forward Pinellas shall create opportunities to expand the participation of the private sector in the planning, design and implementation of transportation projects and programs.
- Policy 5.2.4: Forward Pinellas shall include the public, local governments, the private sector, nonprofit agencies and PSTA in the development of plans addressing the needs of transportation disadvantaged populations.
- Policy 5.2.5: Forward Pinellas shall target traditionally underserved communities to engage them in the transportation planning process and meet the requirements of its Title VI Plan, which ensures the MPO's compliance with nondiscrimination laws and environmental justice in minority and low-income populations.

Active Transportation Plan

Background

The Active Transportation Plan is part of Advantage Pinellas and through the LRTP has set aside funding specifically for bicycle and pedestrian improvements. The Active Transportation Plan replaces and updates the countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan and provides actionable, multimodal strategies to achieve improved bicycle and pedestrian mobility in Pinellas

County. The planning effort was undertaken to identify current conditions, gaps, and opportunities for increasing active transportation options throughout the county. The new plan was developed in partnership with local agencies to create a safer and more accessible bicycle and pedestrian network. The development of the plan focused on identifying and prioritizing projects within Pinellas County which provide for strategic investment to increase walkable communities, decrease pedestrian and cyclist fatalities, expand economic opportunities, and protect the environment through increasing active transportation opportunities.

Overall Equity Considerations

Guiding the Active Transportation Plan is the following vision statement: Pinellas County will have a safe, connected, and comfortable active transportation network, which is community fostered and in harmony with all travel modes, and that advances an efficient, productive, and healthy mobility system for all users. The overarching goal of the Active Transportation Plan is to prioritize equitable opportunities for active transportation. Potential projects for priority funding were evaluated based on nine evaluation criteria tied to four project goal criteria. The nine evaluation criteria and four goals are detailed in the graph below. The goals of the Active Transportation are as follows:

- **Safety:** Improves safety and reduces bicycle and pedestrian conflicts.
- **Integrated and Connected:** Connects with destinations and integrates with other modes such as public transit.
- **Accessible and Comfortable:** Is accessible and comfortable to all users, of all abilities in all communities; and
- **Quality of Life:** Enhances the quality of life, economic condition, and health of the region.

The specific goals are aligned with the following evaluation criteria:

GOAL	EVALUATION CRITERIA
SAFETY	Project addresses an identified High Bicycle or Pedestrian Crash Intensity Segment or Intersection
INTEGRATED & CONNECTED	Project provides direct access to a multimodal corridor and/or is located within or directly connects to an Activity Center (as designated on the Countywide Plan Map)
	Average of project bicycle & pedestrian demand scores
	Project connects 2 or more existing facilities (fills a gap)
	Project provides direct access to transit
ACCESSIBLE & COMFORTABLE	After project completed, the level of traffic stress (LTS) for bicyclists along the project corridor
	After project is completed, sidewalk coverage (including trails) for full length of project
	Project is included within, or provides direct access to an area with a High Composite Equity score (5 or higher) and low bicycle or pedestrian services
QUALITY OF LIFE	Project provides a connection to or extension of an existing recreational facility or destination

Table 3: Specific Goals Criteria

Analysis of Equity Considerations

An overarching theme in the Active Transportation Plan development is a broad consideration for social equity through increasing active transportation and safety for all roadway users. This theme is evident in several aspects of the Active Transportation Plan of which several but not all equity components are summarized as follows:

First, the aforementioned evaluation criteria and goals are based on the nine pillars of the Advantage Pinellas Plan which include the following components which holistically consider social equity:

- Attractive and unique destinations.
- A resilient community.
- Safe and healthy communities.
- Strong economic opportunity.
- Mobility and accessibility for everyone.
- A collaborative vision for the future.

The Active Transportation Plan elaborated on the pillars from Advantage Pinellas to develop specific objectives and performance measures which support each concept. As detailed in the Active Transportation Plan, these objectives and performance measures comprise multiple equity-based components which include a focus on increasing safety in high crash areas and mobility in transportation areas with fewer connections. These components directly improve areas identified as environmental justice areas, referred to as “equity emphasis areas” in the Equity Assessment, as the concentration of high crash locations are within these communities and these communities need the highest degree of improvement for transportation options. Furthermore, the Active Transportation overall objectives and performance measures identified priority areas within low-income and racial minority communities to reduce transit area crashes, provide safety improvements, develop short and long distance bicycle networks, as well as increase bike parking and employment support for bicycle commuting. A priority of decreasing gaps for people who travel by active transportation was a focus in the objectives.

Second, the “Quality of Life” goal of the Active Transportation Plan as it is explained in the Active Transportation Plan has direct equity focus as it is based on increasing job access, bike share opportunities and overall air quality. The emphasis on these factors were based on a concerted effort to address feedback from Pinellas County’s low-income and racial minority communities which through outreach efforts identified lack of transportation options and appeal for active transportation.

Third, an equity assessment style gap demand analysis was conducted as an integral part of funding prioritization. The analysis considered the spatial relationship of underserved areas as well as demographic attributes. Both a numerical analysis and geographic analysis was conducted. As a result of the evaluations, a focus was provided to low bicycle service and concentrated high composite equity scores overlap areas. Furthermore, socio-economic factors

included minority, limited English proficiency and other equity focused criteria. The gap demand analysis included a focus on increasing access public schools, universities and colleges, libraires and overall network connectivity. The network connectivity component was based on filling gaps to activity centers, communities, and other destinations for all people.

Fourth, detailed analyses to include the aforementioned gap demand analysis was accompanied by specific numerical analyses to prioritize the top ten projects though a, “Priority Corridor Selection Analysis” which used demand scores based on factors that include composite equity scores. Additionally, the “Overpass Priority Analysis” included equity composite scores within the matrix. These analyses prioritized equity through ranking and weighting quantification, as well as focused on equity through qualitative aspects by connecting with the public to prioritize projects.

Fifth, the main purpose of the Active Transportation plan was to increase connectivity for biking and walking. This focus included secondary benefits which improve air quality and decrease roadway congestion. Directly, increasing access to the Pinellas Trail provides communities an opportunity to access an arterial greenway system comprised of access to parks and other recreational opportunities. Furthermore, improving active transportation opportunities has the ability to increase transit use for populations without a vehicle.

Sixth, the Active Transportation Plan prioritization process included “geographic equity” by dividing Pinellas County into north, central and south regions to ensure the entirety of people in Pinellas County receive benefits from active transportation funding.

Seventh, the Active Transportation Plan “Best Practices” report provides a list of proactive planning and policy strategies. One planning and policy strategy is prioritizing bicycle and pedestrian projects through strategic equitable process which benefit communities with the greatest need.

Forward Pinellas will continue to monitor equitable outcomes of the Active Transportation Plan over time. The Active Transportation Plan can be viewed at the following website: <https://forwardpinellas.org/document-portal/advantage-pinellas-active-transportation-plan/?wpdmdl=47439&refresh=602c1fb96d2c41613504441>

Multimodal Priority List

Background

As described in the June 2021, “Forward Pinellas Multimodal Priority List Program Structure” report, one of the most important roles the agency fulfills is to work closely with the public and different levels of government to develop plans and advance transportation projects that serve the needs of people residing, working, and visiting Pinellas County. Forward Pinellas develops a priority list to advance projects on a yearly basis. These projects are comprised from competitive programs which fund projects of countywide significance. The multimodal priority list is one of the competitive grant programs Forward Pinellas manages.

The multimodal priority list is for projects seeking a wide array of federal and state funding sources that support and reinforce the Countywide Land Use Plan through their implementation. This program advances projects that will be considered for addition to the FDOT 5 Year Work Program. The multimodal priority program is established to provide safe and efficient transportation options which encompass a wide range of modes, including bikes, walking, transit, and trains. The strategies focus on providing alternatives to single-vehicle travel in order to reduce congestion, improve air quality and improve quality of life for residents. The projects may include funding for multi-use trails, reducing speeds or ferry service.

Overall Equity Considerations

Equity considerations included in the multimodal priority list purpose and are used in the process to evaluate and rank applications to be advanced for funding. Forward Pinellas utilizes six overarching goals to guide decisions and set guidelines for how the projects are prioritized and advanced for funding. The following goals, not in any particular order, are used to compare applications for completeness and overall effectiveness towards improving mobility and accessibility for all users.

- A. Improve Safety
- B. Enhance Equitable Outcomes
- C. Improve Mobility
- D. Foster Economic Growth
- E. Protect the Environment
- F. Improve Resiliency

The project evaluation specifically requires applicants answer questions which support the aforementioned concepts such as inquiring about increasing affordable housing, supporting low-income housing, and encouraging workforce and educational facilities. The evaluation matrix provides points for project location within or improvement to an Environmental Justice community; as well as improving mobility options for these communities.

The categories below are also used to evaluate and rank the project applications. While projects are competitively scored, projects are grouped into scoring ranges. This process provides flexibility for the Forward Pinellas Board to choose to advance projects that serve a diverse range of modes and serve all areas of the county. As indicated below, equitable outcomes are one of the primary objectives of the overall multimodal priority program.

- A. Ability of the Project to Meet the Goals of the Program
 - a. Improve Safety
 - b. Enhance Equitable Outcomes
 - c. Improve Mobility
 - d. Foster Economic Growth
 - e. Protect the Environment
 - f. Improve Resiliency

- B. Countywide Significance of the Project
- C. Project Readiness
- D. Project Coordination and Support

Analysis of Equity Considerations

The multimodal priority list incorporates equity into the factors which guide the decision-making process. Albeit equity is not the primary factor for decisions, it is replicated in the specific application questions and both evaluation frameworks for staff and Forward Pinellas Board processes. Furthermore, the main purpose of the multi-modal planning process is to provide mobility options that encourage means of transportation other than single-vehicle ownership. Programs which advance transportation options such as walking, biking and transit in Pinellas County provide means for people who are unable to afford vehicle ownership a means to travel to work, school and other basic necessities. Through the Equity Assessment, staff heard from the racial minority survey respondents and focus group participants an overall need for transportation options other than vehicle ownership. As such, the primary purpose of the multimodal priority program coupled with the specific equity-related evaluation factors comprise a formula for improving mobility options and thereby economic ability of disfranchised communities. In order to ensure this program meets the goal to increase equitable conditions throughout Pinellas County, evaluating each 5-year Work Plan as it pertains to funding allocations and overall benefits within the Equity Emphasis Area prior to finalizing each annual priority advancement selections, as a second tier of evaluation, could result in an increase in targeting funds equitably.

Transportation Alternatives Program

Background

The Transportation Alternatives (TA) program uses federal funds from the “Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act” (FAST) to reimburse funds for eligible pedestrian and bicycle projects, as well as infrastructure to improve non-car access to transit. The FAST Act allocates funds directly to Forward Pinellas due to the fact Pinellas County is identified as a Transportation Management Area (TMA). The TA program is eligible for a specific range of projects, which include projects such as: pedestrian and bicycle projects; infrastructure for safe routes for children and non-drivers; and Safe Routes to School projects. The range of eligible projects are defined specifically by FDOT and applications submitted for this program must demonstrate overall feasibility for construction. Forward Pinellas application process includes scoring and ranking criteria for projects being considered for TA Program funding. Forward Pinellas selects a maximum of three projects for TA Program funding each yearly application cycle.

Overall Equity Considerations

Forward Pinellas has created an application process for the TA program which specifically aims to advance projects which provide for a wide range of direct and indirect equity related benefits. This process includes application ranking to allocate points for projects which provide for the following:

- Direct access to a Multimodal Corridor
- Direct connection to an Activity Center
- Connection of two or more existing bicycle/pedestrian facilities (fills a gap)
- Direct access to existing transit routes
- Project is within (or provides direct access to) an Environmental Justice area
- Provides direct access to an Environmental Justice area

The allocation of points for the aforementioned connections provides opportunities for people to reach basic necessities. The access and connection to multimodal corridors is critical for movement of people throughout the County. Per the Countywide Plan, Forward Pinellas has utilized the Multimodal Corridor category to designate corridors of critical importance that are served by multiple modes of transport, including automobile, bus, bicycle, rail, and/or pedestrian transportation. This land use category is characterized by mixed-use development, supported by, and designed to facilitate transit, and is particularly appropriate for creating transit connections between Activity Centers. Connection to a multimodal corridor comprised of mixed-use development provides for a foundation to increase economic development. Furthermore, Forward Pinellas has utilized the Activity Center category to recognize those areas of the county within each local government jurisdiction that have been identified and planned for in a special and detailed manner, based on their unique location, intended use, appropriate density/intensity, and pertinent planning considerations. Connecting communities to Activity Centers provides for increased opportunity for education, employment, and recreation. An isolated process of solely focusing on connection to Activity Centers and Multimodal corridors for project scoring transportation project may provide some indirect benefits for historically excluded populations; however, the actualized benefits are through the TA program allocating points for towards projects which are located within or provide direct access to an Environmental Justice area. Connecting people residing in these communities to the larger multimodal corridors and activity centers provides for opportunities for these communities to access basic necessities. Furthermore, as mentioned in other sections of this report, the increased points for projects which increase transit and bicycle/pedestrian facilities has the ability to increase mobility for people who are unable to afford vehicle ownership.

Analysis of Equity Considerations

The TA program provides quantitative measurements to evaluate project benefits to the Equity Emphasis Area through project location and project benefits. Holistically, equity is also considered in the decision-making process through the agency inclusion of active transportation and transit points in the evaluation rating process. To further increase the process for increasing projects within the Equity Emphasis Area, the program evaluation factors could add higher weight for projects located within an Equity Emphasis Area and those that directly benefit these communities.

Complete Streets Program

Background

Forward Pinellas' goal is to incentivize transportation investments, so they serve as a catalyst for transformative redevelopment, particularly through the implementation of “Complete Streets” projects. The purpose of a Complete Streets project is to increase safe mobility for all roadway users. These projects are inherently designed for safety, especially for those people who have underinvestment such as older adults, people living with disabilities, low-income communities and historically excluded communities commonly comprised of racial minority populations. While many Complete Streets design concepts eliminate a vehicle lane to add pedestrian and cyclists’ improvements, some projects work to prioritize safety through slower speeds and pedestrian refuge. Most Complete Streets projects include a wide variety of safety improvements as there is not one single solution to reduce roadway fatalities and increase safe mobility.

Since 2016, Forward Pinellas has operated a yearly grant program with funds allocated from the federal government to award \$1.1 million for Complete Streets projects. These awards are allocated through a yearly competitive grant program providing \$1 million dollars award for a construction project and \$100,000 for a concept project. The agency considered developing another quantitative matrix for evaluating these applications, and also had the choice to unilaterally determine project allocations for the \$1.1 million funds each year. The decision for annual solicitation of applicants, with Forward Pinellas providing technical assistance, was determined to provide broader opportunities for entities within Pinellas County which may not have the funds to provide a match for other grant programs or other prohibitive constraints.

Overall Equity Considerations

The Complete Streets application requires applicants to disclose how transportation disadvantaged (persons with disabilities, children, the elderly and low income) populations will be served by the improvements proposed; as well as, to identify if the project is located within an Environmental Justice area and/or a Community Redevelopment Area. A subcommittee is formed comprised of professional planners within the region to evaluate the assemblage of yearly submitted applications and propose which applicants will receive the construction or concept award or a bifurcation of one of the grants with another applicant. The evaluation process includes subcommittee members evaluate the application material to determine which projects provide a catalyst for land use transformation, safe mobility, community support and other relevant factors. The intent of the subcommittee evaluation being based on a holistic and qualitative review process is to encourage each application to be reviewed on its own merits without a single factor or set of factors determining the award recipients.

Analysis of Equity Considerations

Albeit the Complete Streets program is designed to provide safe travel for all users, there are limits to the grant allocations due to funding availability. Forward Pinellas has structured the application materials for the program to include disclosure of elements, such as location within a CRA, to be considered in the decision-making process. This process of disclosure

requirements for the subcommittee review process encourages equity to be factored into decision; however, it is not prescriptively required. A review of past award recipients indicates 10 out of the 13 past Complete Streets awards were located within or abutting an Environmental Justice area. To ensure a focus on equity is implemented for future awards, Forward Pinellas could consider utilizing a basic ranking process whereby applications located within the Equity Emphasis Area or providing direct benefits to and Equity Emphasis Area had a higher probability of being selected by the subcommittee.

FORWARD PINELLAS INTERNAL REVIEW SUMMARY

Overall, Forward Pinellas has assembled a mixture of processes to evaluate, consider and include equity considerations into planning processes. The agency has continued to evolve to include an increase of quantitative analyses with specific equity related variables as well as qualitative processes which holistically incorporate equity. Plans such as the Gateway Master Plan have specific targets which are being measured and evaluated through time on the basis of increasing the livelihood for historically excluded communities. Other programs such as the Housing Compact aim to improve inequitable conditions in Pinellas County, such as housing, to increase opportunities for economic and personal success.

To further increase the agency's mission to promote inclusivity and equity within Pinellas County, the agency could consider the following:

1. Include weighted scoring for project awards and project prioritization located within an Equity Emphasis Area and those projects which demonstrate direct benefits to these communities.
2. Systematically evaluate each LRTP, TIP and associated 5-year Work Plan prior to finalizing decisions, and determine opportunities to increase funding allocations for projects which provide direct benefits to the Equity Emphasis Area.
3. Include an agency-wide matrix for each project, plan, and program to utilize which diligently evaluates equity factors during and prior to decision-making.
4. Specifically increase agency awareness regarding the need to increase better access to food resources and medical services.
5. Include subcommittee members for project application evaluations from BIPOC communities.
6. For projects and programs that incorporating scoring for ranking, add increase weight and/or points to projects within Equity Emphasis Area and directly benefits these communities.
7. Restructure Complete Streets program to have an equity-based scoring structure.

Section 5: Forward Pinellas Internal Evaluation

PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

Conducting the Equity Assessment required auditing agency operations and composition by asking ourselves, “who are we and how do we reflect the people, their needs and values within Pinellas County”? To answer this question, we reviewed the agency work force structure, committee structures and the existing agency strategic plan. As an essential starting point for diversification, the data collected on these agency aspects will help for tracking the professional field of urban and transportation planning, public representation, political voice, and county demographics. In order to compile data on the agency work force and committee structure, a private survey was distributed, and the information was requested but not mandated. The strategic plan analysis was compiled through close examination of the report in conjunction with a focus on equity and inclusion factors. The findings from the internal evaluation are summarized as follows.

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Forward Pinellas works with the following 9 advisory committees made of elected representatives and experts from around Pinellas County. These committees make recommendations for plan amendments and revisions and advise Forward Pinellas planners in various aspects of their work.

- Planners Advisory Committee (PAC): The PAC provides technical input and makes recommendations on matters considered by Forward Pinellas, acting as the Pinellas Planning Council.
- Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC): The BPAC includes staff from various governmental agencies, law enforcement personnel and citizens and provides input and direction on bicycle and pedestrian related issues, plans and policies.
- Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC): The CAC is comprised of a cross section of representatives of the community that serve as a conduit for public input to the plans and programs of Forward Pinellas.

	BPAC	TCC	PAC	CAC
Age				
20-25	1 (5%)			
26-30		1 (6%)	2 (11%)	3 (18%)
30-40		2 (13%)	7 (39%)	2 (12%)
40-50	2 (10%)	6 (38%)	5 (28%)	
50-60	6 (30%)	5 (31%)	2 (11%)	6 (35%)
60-64	1 (5%)		2 (11%)	1 (6%)
65+	10 (50%)	2 (13%)		5 (12%)
Race				
White, US born	18 (82%)	15 (100%)	16 (89%)	15 (89%)
AAPI, US Born			1 (5.5%)	
White, Immigrant	1 (5%)		1 (5.5%)	
Mixed	2 (9%)			1 (6%)
Latinx	1 (5%)			1 (6%)
Residence				
Oldsmar	1		1	
St. Pete	5	5	3	1
Largo	1	2	1	2
Clearwater	2	4	3	5
Gulfport				2
Pinellas Park	2	1		2
Unincorporated	3	1	2	2
Safety Harbor				1
Dunedin	1	1	1	2
Pasadena	1			
St. Pete Beach	1		1	
Seminole	2		2	
Tarpon Springs			1	
Gender				
Female	8 (38%)	6 (40%)	11 (61%)	6 (35%)
Male	13 (62%)	9 (60%)	7 (39%)	11 (65%)

Table 4: Committee Structure

- Local Coordinating Board: The LCB oversees the Pinellas County Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Program and consists of an elected official as chairperson and representatives of social service agencies, private transportation providers, FDOT and citizens who utilize the Program.
- Pinellas Trail Security Task Force: The PTSTF consists of law enforcement officials and County staff and is responsible for monitoring and addressing issues related to safety on the Pinellas Trail.
- School Transportation Safety Committee: The STSC is made up of local elected officials and school board members that meet to address school-related transportation access and safety issues.
- Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC): The TCC consists of planners, engineers and environmental protection staff that provides input on transportation matters from a technical perspective.
- Legislative Committee: The legislative committee prepares legislative priority positions, monitors active legislation, and discusses a range of potential concerns and issues related to state and federal legislative affairs.
- Waterborne Transportation Committee: The Forward Pinellas Waterborne Transportation Committee brings local government partners together to discuss the status and potential opportunities for supporting and expanding waterborne transportation options throughout Pinellas County.
- In addition to our advisory committees, Forward Pinellas supports and participates in the Pinellas Community Traffic Safety Team (CTST) which is comprised of local government, FDOT, law enforcement, School Board, emergency representatives and health care representatives.

Demographic Data was collected from the Planners Advisory Committee (PAC), Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), and Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). Data collected includes race, immigration status, gender, age, and location of residence within Pinellas County. Those who responded to the survey did not necessarily answer all demographic questions, which may result in total responses and percentages being slightly different between demographic categories. Response rates are as follows for the 4 committees for which data was collected: CAC-17 responses of 32 committee members; TCC-16 responses of 37 committee members; PAC-18 responses of 43 committee members; BPAC-22 responses of 33 committee members.

Regarding race, we see an overrepresentation of white committee members and an underrepresentation, or complete lack of representation, for all other races when compared to the current racial percentages in Pinellas County which are as follows:

- White-72%
- Black-11%
- Latinx-11%
- Asian or Pacific Islander-4%
- Mixed/Other-2%

FINDINGS

1. Work Force Structure

Forward Pinellas is a county government appointing authority operating with a small agency workforce comprised of under 20 people. The organization structure is based on a leadership team that reports directly to the executive director, supported by professional and technical staff. The staff is organized in a manner that provides for an integrated approach to transportation and land use planning, and allows for a high degree of cross-functional assignments. The entire agency is supported by a communications and outreach manager, along with a finance and administrative team. The Forward Pinellas Organization Chart provides the complete information regarding the agency organization:



Figure 22: Workforce Structure

The demographics of the agency demonstrate that as of fall 2021, the agency was dominated by individuals who identify as white and as female. The agency racial minority composition is less than 20% and all staff reported being U.S. born. The female to male ratio is nearly 4:1 with the largest age group representing 30-40 year old individuals and the median age being 33 years old. Overall, the demographic findings for Forward Pinellas demonstrate an underrepresentation of racial minority staff members resulting in a need for the agency to advance towards racial equity in the workplace. Not all staff members completed the voluntary survey; however, the findings demonstrate lack of workforce diversity and need for increased awareness and interventions.

In order to diversify and increase racial equity in the workforce, it is suggested the agency conduct hiring practices which specifically seek out diversity for hiring and promotion practices. Furthermore, strategies such as developing paid internships for students which are members of Federally protected classes (e.g. race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, etc.) is highly suggested to increase opportunities for a more diverse workforce. The agency currently does not possess an equity position which would solely be dedicated to advancing racial equity and inclusion practices both internally and externally. To the maximum extent practicable, it is recommended the agency develop a full-time position for an internal equity expert which would increase agency awareness and agency strategies to comprehensively increase equity and inclusion.

2. Analysis of Strategic Business Plan

Forward Pinellas's strategic business plan, adopted 10/11/2017, begins with a letter from then-Chairman of the Forward Pinellas Board John Morroni which gives a brief history of the organization as well as its principal functions. The letter continues to a list of the 7 goals that encompass the work of the organization:

1. We will enable safe travel for all users.
2. We will use data to tell stories about who we are as a county and what our future should be.
3. We will plan a future for Pinellas County as a whole.
4. We will grow purposefully as an agency.
5. We will engage the public to create a future that reflects its needs and desires.
6. We will work with Pinellas County's communities to create plans that reflect their needs.
7. We will develop partnerships to strengthen our cities, county, and region.

Throughout the rest of the plan, these goals are organized into three categories called the Adapt-Build-Connect (ABC) framework. Goals 1-3 fall into the "Adapt" category, goals 4,5 fall into the "Build" category, and goals 6,7 fall into the "Connect" category. The goals are broken into objectives, specific steps that Forward Pinellas takes or will take to work toward the goal, and initiatives, specific programs or plans that indicate action toward an objective.

In the entire plan, equity is only specifically mentioned in Goal 1, Objective 3 which states:

"Integrate safety into all aspects of transportation planning, design, and operations through a 6E Framework of Engineering, Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Equity, and Engagement."

Beyond this single mention, equity is not specifically addressed throughout the rest of the report. However, with the broad scope of each goal, equity can be inferred to be a part of certain goals. Goal 1 explicitly stating its effect on "all users" implies a certain consideration of equity across demographic groups. Goals 5 and 6 stating their focus on working with communities and the public to reflect the needs of the county as a whole also carries an

implication that equity should be considered. However, beyond the aforementioned Goal 1, Objective 3, there is no specific mention of equity in any of the goals, objectives, and initiatives discussed in the Strategic Plan.

While inferences can be made, there is no explicit requirement or mandate that equity be considered in planning, research, community outreach, implementation, or assessment activities carried out by Forward Pinellas. Further, there are no processes or procedures laid out in the Strategic Plan that address how equity considerations will be addressed when examining new projects. Examples of this could include a flow chart or checklist that focuses on equity issues related to project design. Next, when discussing the initiatives and current projects and programs being carried out by Forward Pinellas, there is no mention of equity in the development or implementation. Similar to the goals and objectives, there are phrasings where equity could be inferred or included in a program. For example, the description of the Complete Streets initiative includes the words “safe and accessible for all users”. The Community Conversations initiative discusses “coming to the public with an open conversation”. These phrasings have the potential to include equity, but do not explicitly require that equity be considered as part of the development of projects.

Currently, in 2022, Forward Pinellas is working to revise the Strategic Business Plan. Equity will be an important addition to the revised plan. The updated plan will include equity as a key consideration of all goals, objectives, and initiatives and will also include a summary of proposed procedures staff can use to ensure equity is a part of new projects and proposals.

INTERNAL EVALUATION EQUITY ACTION PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Forward Pinellas can work to advance diversity and racial equity through dedicating agency resources to broadening the workforce and committee structures and dedicating the Strategic Business Plan to resourcing equity in all agency practices. This includes an overall commitment to advance racial equality through training, staff composition and staff position descriptions and strategies to diversify the agency committees. A new “Transformative Approach” as demonstrated below is required to alter organizational culture, agency operations, shift values and incorporate the entire agency staff and committees. Specifics regarding operationalizing the aforementioned concepts are included in the report recommendations section.



Figure 23: Approaches to Change
Image Courtesy of: Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), 2016

Section 6: Stakeholder Feedback

PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

In December 2021, Forward Pinellas revisited the stakeholders from the listening sessions and requested assistance with providing feedback and comments on the findings from the analyses as well as the draft action items. Several discussions were held to include one webinar with multiple attendees as well as separate one-on-one conversations. Forward Pinellas provided a comprehensive presentation disclosing the findings from the assessment and asked for open and honest feedback, and to be as critical as possible to provide the best formulated action items for future implementation. Forward Pinellas also presented the findings of the assessment and draft action items to the agency Technical Coordinating Committee, Citizens Advisory Committee and Bicycle, Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

RESULTS

Overall, the stakeholder feedback was positive regarding the content analyzed, methods utilized, and findings represented. Several stakeholders commented on the unsettling data regarding the extremely high number of fatalities occurring on the roadways within the Equity Emphasis Area. The disproportionate impact to low-income and racial minority communities was unfortunately unsurprising, albeit this awareness resulted in the agreement that change is direly overdue. Specific feedback included utilizing the jargon, “historically excluded” versus “disadvantaged” as the latter implies lesser abilities based on personal agency. Regarding the affordable housing information, it was suggested that Forward Pinellas adds a caveat that the word affordable may be a misnomer. A stakeholder made the suggestions to re-organize the presentation slides on the public survey to first show who took the survey and then provide the results. Several stakeholders commented on the need to ensure race and equity is common language in land use planning. One stakeholder stressed that racism is a public health crises. Several stakeholders committed to further engagement with Forward Pinellas to provide feedback on the implementation phase of the Equity Assessment action plans. The Forward Pinellas committee feedback was generally supportive with one non-member, public member during the BPAC meeting questioning the concept that address is a proxy for opportunity and one BPAC member stating support for the nuclear family albeit that was not directly in line with the information presented. Several committee members from each presentation provided appreciation for the assessment and thanked staff for conducting this work. Overall, the committee presentations resulted in positive support for the Equity Assessment.

Section 7: Needs Assessment

EXTERNAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Community members indicated a variety of needs in the outreach section of this assessment. These comments fell into a few broad categories: transit, housing, employment, and access to resources.

Residents indicated many concerns with transportation in Pinellas County. It was commonly said that one must own a car to reside in Pinellas County. Non-car transportation methods are limited and those that are available are often inefficient and ineffective. Many respondents said that they would use public transport if it was more widely available, more effective, safer, and cleaner. It was also indicated that the lack of public transportation limits access to jobs, education, and other community resources for low-income segments of the population.



Figure 24: Concerns of Residents

Affordable housing was also a common topic. Renters often said that monthly rent was increasing, and incomes are remaining stagnant, causing more of the monthly budget to go toward housing. It was also indicated that, at the current rate, many would be forced out of their homes as they could no longer afford their housing. It was also mentioned that purchasing a home is becoming increasingly difficult as home prices continue to rise.

Employment was another important topic. While very few respondents indicated difficulty finding a job, many said that the available jobs were mostly low-paying and that they had difficulty supporting themselves and their families on these wages. Access to government, community, and physical resources was also a common theme of survey responses, listening sessions, and focus groups. Respondents from many neighborhoods indicated lack of access to healthy food choices, safe open spaces for play and recreation, quality K-12 and post-secondary education, and government services. Many residents said they have little to no contact with government representatives and that there is no governmental presence in their neighborhood, aside from police. People indicated that they did not know how to contact their representatives and felt unheard or ignored when they did make contact. Finally, many indicated overall lack of trust in specific representatives and the overall institution of government. Outreach respondents said that they had heard empty promises before that were followed by little to no substantial change.

INTERNAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT/SWOT ANALYSIS

For an assessment of the internal needs of our agency, Forward Pinellas staff conducted an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, also known as a SWOT Analysis. This analysis considers both internal and external conditions and how they affect the work of our agency. The internal portion examines strengths and weaknesses while the external section looks at opportunities and threats.

A review of this analysis highlights four main categories of information: 1) things our agency does well; 2) opportunities available to our agency we have not yet utilized; 3) weaknesses we have the ability to improve upon; and 4) weaknesses that are out of our authority and control.

For the first category, a review of the “Strengths” section shows several aspects of our agency that work well and can be used when turning our attention toward equity considerations. For the second category, a review of the “Opportunities” section shows resources and partnerships available in our county that we are not currently using including higher education institutions and community/neighborhood organizations. This area also includes internal actions like restructuring our board and citizen committees to represent the demographics of Pinellas County more accurately.

Strengths

- GIS capabilities
- Partnerships with local governments and aligned agencies and organizations
- Collaborative and creative working environment
- Positive reputation countywide
- Effective working relationship and high level of trust with the board
- Robust communications efforts
- Staff competency and dedication
- Visionary executive leadership

Weaknesses

- Limited flexibility of FDOT funds Lack of authority to affect certain equity outcomes (i.e., affordable housing, living conditions, etc.)
- Lack of representative demographics among board
- Communication to new employees regarding their role in the agency
- Homogenous advisory committee demographics
- No agency-wide policy for equity and inclusion
- Differing approaches to considering equity in projects, plans, and programs
- No designated expert on equity on staff (i.e., no liaison/coordinator)
- No Spanish language proficient staff member(s)

Table 5: Internal Strengths and Weaknesses

Opportunities

- Utilize academic research on equity to identify and implement best practices
- Public engagement with equity emphasis areas and communities of concern
- Change board representation to reflect county's demographics
- Student learning/internship opportunities with local higher education institutions
- Increased communication to new employees regarding their role in the overall mission of the agency
- Increase in funding appropriations and grant opportunities through the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act

Threats

- Uncertain political environment
- Board governs staff decision and can overrule certain recommendations
- Market forces impacts on housing prices (for PPC)
- Legislative actions conflicting with agency policies (i.e., HB 1339)
- NIMBYism associated with certain types of development and/or transportation projects
- No specific budget line item for equity projects (we need to discuss this as there is a line item in the UPWP related to the Title VI program)

Table 6: External Opportunities and Concerns

The third and fourth categories of information reveal institutional weaknesses we have authority to change and those we don't. Areas we have the authority to change include improving communication with and training of new Forward Pinellas employees, seeking staff members fluent in Spanish, restructuring advisory committees and the governing board, revising the agency's strategic plan to include a budget item for equity, and working with contractors who can review assist us with improving our equity outcomes. There are also institutional limitations that Forward Pinellas does not have the authority address. These include the political environment, actions of the state and federal governments that conflict with our agency policies, market forces that control many of the issues facing Pinellas County (e.g., housing prices, wages), and the fact that our governing board can overrule recommendations of planners.

Section 8: Alternatives Analysis

PROJECT PURPOSE

An alternative analysis project purpose and needs statement determines the range of reasonable and potential alternatives. As explained throughout this report, the Equity Assessment project purpose is multi-faceted and includes the special role planners play within the government and community context and the dire need for policies and programs which advance racial equity. To reiterate the project purpose, professional planners have the responsibility to seek social justice by working to expand choice and opportunity for all persons while recognizing and promoting racial and economic integration. It is imperative planners work to dismantle historic government practices which created systemic racism. Historic policies, programs and social systems have resulted in community developments which have toxic inequality in Pinellas County. **Through the Equity Assessment, there has been a recognition that all future agency planning practices should incorporate an equity lens to ensure that economic growth benefits the most vulnerable, marginalized, and low-income communities.** This requires a comprehensive approach which acknowledges that existing systems and policies result in unjust outcomes for marginalized communities. To do this, Forward Pinellas must take the first step to define which needs should be prioritized and what actions the agency can take within jurisdictional and resource boundaries.

Needs: Based on the initial findings of the Equity Assessment, it is crucial Forward Pinellas develop strategies which specifically address the following:



Figure 25: Needs of County Residents

METHODOLOGY

After identification of the prioritized public needs, Forward Pinellas conducted robust research regarding project alternatives based on agency abilities from the SWOT assessment, and based on a comparative assessment relative to other organization equity initiatives.

Based on the SWOT conducted for this study, Forward Pinellas developed the range of alternatives which include but are not limited to, expansion of outreach and engagement, use of GIS, development of equity-based partnerships, and staff training opportunities.

Subsequently, a comparative assessment of 25 different organizations across the country which operate with similar responsibilities was conducted to determine the widest range of potential project alternatives (please see [Appendix 1](#) for comparative assessment). Once the range of potential projects were developed, potentially similar initiatives were grouped and

evaluated together to provide equivalent evaluation standards. As a result, three different alternative analyses were developed to consider the overall benefits, feasibility and cost for future equity-based projects. Each alternative analysis is included in [Appendix 2](#) and is briefly summarized below. The alternative analysis considered direct, indirect and cumulative benefits, as well as cost and/or staff resources.

GIS Alternative Analysis

Forward Pinellas staff operate with a high-level of GIS capability and technical competency. Utilizing GIS to better inform decision making processes and public awareness regarding equity, is an essential process to be included in the Equity Assessment action plans. Based on available GIS analyses which provide equity data, Forward Pinellas evaluated potential project alternatives. Potential GIS alternatives included studies conducted by other agencies similar to Forward Pinellas as well as other planning agencies and academia. Based on the alternative analysis, the GIS Story map providing education to prevent discrimination and promote inclusivity similar to the work done by the Boston Region MPO was chosen as a priority due to the opportunity for staff internally to manage the development of the GIS platform and the direct, indirect, and cumulative benefits. Also, the development of a regional equity tool providing an interactive mapping application tool that identifies the region's vulnerable, low to moderate income population, and historic settlements was also prioritized, as it would require likely year of development and would have direct, indirect, and likely cumulative benefits. The regional equity tool would be similar to the work done by the Houston-Galveston Area Council. Lastly, the Access to opportunity GIS analysis similar to the work done by The San Francisco Foundation and The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity was chosen as a priority due to the transformative benefits (direct, indirect, and cumulative) and the information would provide important data for land use and transportation decisions; however, this work would require consultant support in addition to staff time.

Outreach and Communications Alternative Analysis

Forward Pinellas has a robust outreach and communications program strengthened by staff initiatives as well as strong partnerships which assist in the flow of information. Providing equity in our outreach requires a comprehensive approach. This includes taking the lessons learned during the Equity Assessment, regarding the historical lack of political voice provided to racial minority communities and building a framework for engagement built on the concept of "moving at the speed of trust". By combining in-person and virtual outreach to create hybrid experiences, and utilizing community leaders and partner agencies, the agency can work towards engaging everyone in the community equitably. Though the pandemic brought a myriad of challenges, it also provided incredible opportunities to engage people effectively at a countywide level with the use of social media and other digital outreach tools.

The alternative analysis considered the multi-faceted approach required to effectively engage communities and prioritized a mixture of in-person and virtual communications; development

of long-term relationships with trusted community members; partnerships with equity-based organizations and schools; development of project specific equity committees; as well as diversifying language translations. All potential activities were ranked to determine which activities supporting communication and outreach would occur each year, with each potential alternative being prioritized for an action time.

The outreach activities prioritized for implementing include attending or host events in the Environmental Emphasis Area, such as pop up events, one-on-one engagement, webinars and other in-person or online opportunities were prioritized. Attending community meetings to improve long-term relationships with community leaders. Working with minority communities in Pinellas County to bridge trust, moving slowly, and utilize more effective methods for communication. Partnering with community groups in Equity Emphasis Areas to create roadway safety campaigns with use of social media, blogs, newsletters, etc. Partner with Pinellas County schools to provide educational material which is safety focused as well as a "what is planning curriculum" to encourage students to consider the planning profession.

Projects, Tools, Training and Programs Alternative Analysis

A wide range of agency-wide project alternatives to increase equity practices have been considered as action items. Utilizing an alternative analysis, the potential alternatives regarding agency programs, projects, tools, and trainings were grouped together and evaluated given cost and benefits. The following alternatives have been prioritized based on the aforementioned factors and will be pursued in the agency action items.

Staff Tools:

Staff Tools

- Equity scorecard tool: Implement an excel based tool which is simple, repeatable, and streamlined; to advance equity in project screening and prioritization. Or implement a narrative based tool for incorporating equity and inclusion in project processes which is simple, repeatable and streamlined.
- Equity decision flowchart: Develop a streamlined, effective, and systematic process for making decisions on projects which requires the consideration of equity and inclusion factors during the decision making process.
- Public Participation Plan (PPP): Review and update PPP to increase specific strategies for collaboration with historically excluded communities as identified in the Equity Assessment.
- Update ADA Complaint Procedure: The ADA complaint procedure was an area identified for improvement through equity assessment and chosen for early intervention, as the process has not been updated since 2014.
- Agency Procurement: Update the agency procurement policy to expand opportunities for inclusion and equitable contracting practices.

Staff Training

- Purchase the "Beloved Community Equity Audit" for agency implementation. This equity audit is a comprehensive tool to assess diversity, equity and inclusion within organizational culture. The audit provides detailed report on strengths as well as suggested areas for improvement. Report based on concept that, "people are the greatest unit of change - embrace shared values of diversity and inclusion".
- Increase staff training on equity and inclusion through continuous learning by partnering with Pinellas County Human Resources (HR) Organizational & Talent Development (OTD).

Agency Processes and Programs

- Diversify Forward Pinellas Board: Increase political voice and improve equitable decision making processes by including permanent memberships to board which comprise trusted representatives of minority communities in Pinellas County. Per 339.175, MPO voting membership consists of equitable geographic-population ratio basis. As such, the 2020 Pinellas County Equity Profile should be used to include additional membership seats to reflect equitable representation.
- Mobility Audits: On a yearly basis, partner with municipalities and local organizations on a site-specific mobility audit located within the Equity Emphasis Area.
- Equity-Based Safety Program: Utilizing MPO funding, focus the Safe Streets Pinellas vision zero project implementation on an equity basis which develops specific strategies for increasing roadway safety within the Equity Emphasis Area.
- Partner Education and Communication Preventing Gentrification and Displacement: Develop strategic messages (blogs, social media posts, knowledge exchange series, presentations, etc.) which can work to prevent gentrification and displacement through education of partners. Specifically, agency will promote existing affordable housing density bonus; promote benefits of accessory dwelling units; highlight effectiveness of community benefits agreements and encourage local fair housing law enforcement.
- Equity Assessment Webpage: Utilize agency website to include specific data on baseline inequalities in Pinellas County and include a performance metrics dashboard to report agency progress on equity action items.
- LRTP Equity Focus: Set specific target and monitoring for increasing percentage of the LRTP allocation for funds within Equity Emphasis Area to increase access to education, employment, health care and other basic necessities.
- Healthy Food Access: Agency increased collaboration with Health in All Policies Healthy St. Pete Program and overall increased emphasis on healthy food access, where possible, and starting with Complete Streets Grant Program.

OPERATIONAL AND FISCAL BARRIERS OF ALTERNATIVES

Overall, implementing new processes, programs and training requires the use of agency resources and to some extent additional funding mechanisms. Resources are required to improve agency awareness, education, and decision-making processes to increase equitable outcomes. Forward Pinellas can demonstrate sincere dedication to prioritizing equity through allocating staff time and funding opportunities. Conversely, operational and fiscal barriers are a reality of government operations. On an operational perspective, change can be entirely too slow and even when well-intended challenging. Forward Pinellas staff will require a transition plan to begin implementing the aforementioned project alternatives. Regarding fiscal barriers, there is currently not a dedicated funding mechanism solely for equity from existing local, state, or federal appropriations. Furthermore, there is a challenging political environment regarding funding for equity related work. The fiscal constraints which are most impactful include those that require funding consultant assistance, such as the GIS alternatives and external analyses by organizations such as Beloved. To address this fiscal barriers, Forward Pinellas can first incorporate equity into all staff positions through training and staff created tools and processes; and second, prioritize equity as a component of all main and minor agency practices. The inclusion of specific budget line items for equity safety programs and other equity-based projects is suggested.

Section 9: Equity Assessment Action Items

POLICIES, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

First, a few important concepts to frame the agency next steps:

1. **Why focus on race for an equity assessment?** Race, income, and wealth are closely connected in the United States. Focusing on race helps to create a starting point to develop strategies to work with other minority communities.
2. **Why the government?** The government provides resources which benefit and disadvantage people.
3. **What is racial equity?** Racial equity means that race can't be used to predict success, and we have successful systems and structure that work for all.
4. **How to improve equitable processes at Forward Pinellas which result in increased racial equity in Pinellas County?** The most important asset for agencies, organizations and companies are the people who collectively support and work towards a shared vision. Here at Forward Pinellas, we are making the commitment to an equity vision which incorporates equitable practices in all our agency missions. First, we must start with the commitment to long-term and meaningful relationships with historically excluded communities. We must embrace the concept of “moving at the speed of trust” with new collaborations with schools, religious and community centers, as well as equity-based organizations. We must work to leverage

agency policy, partnerships, and funding to develop solutions for transportation gaps, affordable housing, access to healthy food, access to opportunity, increase of public information. Development of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely equity action items will be supported by specific policies, objectives, and strategies. Furthermore, these policies must be continually evaluated for accountability and evolve for continual growth. In order to being operationalizing and normalizing equity as the lens applied to agency practices, a wide-range of near-term, mid-term and long-term

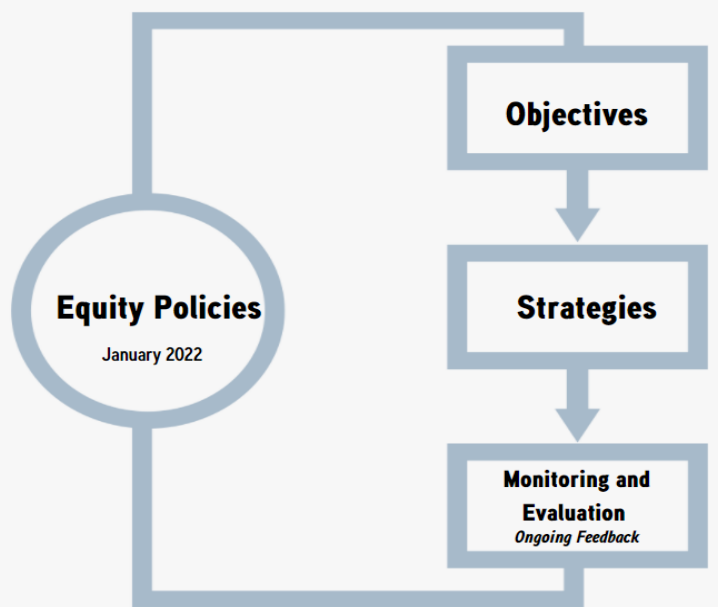


Figure 26: Cycle of Accountability

actions will be implemented that address not only the concerns and needs of the public but the areas for agency improvement. Specific action items and performance measures are detailed in **Appendix 3.**

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS:

Equity Policy 1: Remove Barriers for Political Voice.

Objective: Improve access to the decision-making process for all people residing in Pinellas County.

Strategy Examples:

- Forward Pinellas Board Reapportionment for increased diversity in representation.
- Expand diverse representation on Forward Pinellas committees.
- Create equity committees for large-scale planning projects.
- Expand multi-lingual information on large planning documents and social media posts.
- Expand opportunities for public engagement through pop-up events, in-person engagements, and collaboration with St. Pete College.
- Development of school-based roadway safety program.

Equity Policy 2: Local Organization Collaboration

Objective: Grass-roots efforts with communities within Equity Emphasis Areas and cross-sector / cross-jurisdictional partnerships to achieve systemic change.

Strategy Examples:

- Establish and strengthen long-term relationships with representatives trusted by diverse communities to include UNITE Pinellas and local equity-based organizations.
- Yearly focus group sessions with SPC.
- Incentivize affordable housing by working with local governments.
- Continue to work with Pinellas County and Local Governments on Countywide Housing Compact.
- Encourage local fair housing law enforcement through partnerships with municipalities.

Equity Policy 3: Increase Access to Opportunity

Objective: Develop equitable transportation options and land use decisions which increase availability of quality employment, education, and other necessities.

Strategy Example:

- Contract an “Access to Opportunity Assessment” (GIS-based).
- Agency increased collaboration with healthy food access organizations and increased focus on agency Complete Streets grant program for healthy food access.
- Set specific targets and monitoring to increase equity funding in Long-Range Transportation Plan.
- Development of roadway safety program based on an equity lens.
- Yearly mobility audits within Equity Emphasis Areas.

Equity Policy 4: Strengthen Awareness and Agency Accountability

Objective: Strengthen awareness regarding equity needs, inclusion and structural racism – in all its forms, and strengthen agency accountability

Strategy Examples:

- Development of equity tools, such as Equity Scorecard and Equity Decision Flowchart.
- Update Public Participation Plan and ADA Compliance Plan to increase specific process to incorporate historically disadvantaged communities.
- Update Forward Pinellas procurement processes to ensure local, regional, and federal government dollars benefit historically excluded communities.
- Contract Beloved Community Equity Audit for agency or similar agency audit.
- Increase staff training on equity and inclusion through continuous learning by partnering with Pinellas County Human Resources (HR) Organizational & Talent Development (OTD).
- Update the Equity Assessment webpage on the agency website to include specific data on baseline inequalities in Pinellas County and include a performance metrics dashboard to report agency progress on equity action items.
- Develop a GIS story map on the agency website to provide awareness, increased education and data regarding structural racism and baseline inequalities in Pinellas County which Forward Pinellas aims to address through series of action items.

MID-TERM ACTIONS:

1. **Monitoring:** Forward Pinellas will conduct quarterly monitoring on equity action items progress and report internally to staff. Equity action items will be reported on agency webpage.
2. **Adaptive Management:** In 2025, implement adaptive management strategy to address any strategies which have been ineffective or failed.
3. **Annual Report:** Each year, an annual report will be developed. After completion 3-year implementation of equity assessment action items, conduct a comprehensive assessment of the success criteria from the monitoring of the action items.

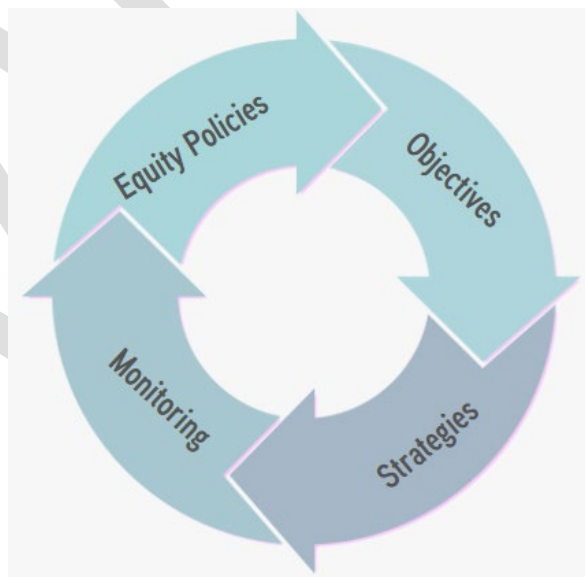


Figure 27: Cycle of Review

LONG-TERM ACTIONS:

1. **Equity Assessment Audit:** In 2027, after 5-years of implementation and adaptive management strategies, conduct a robust equity assessment to measure baseline inequalities in Pinellas County as well as audit agency practices. Revisit policies, objectives and strategies and make necessary adjustments.

MONITORING PROGRAM:

1. Near-Term Action Items 1-3 Year Monitoring Plan:

- a. Quarterly monitoring utilizing the specific action items and staff members responsible for action items will be implemented during spring 2022.
- b. Quarterly quantitative and qualitative reports will be developed and utilized for annual report.
- c. Each year starting in 2022 and extending to 2025, yearly equity reports will be developed which provide quantitative and qualitative data on action items implementation performance measures and success criteria.
 - i. Annual reports will disclose any required adaptive management strategies implemented.
 - ii. Annual reports will disclose specific data on agency performance on achieving each action item.
 - iii. Annual reports will include strategies to address any action items which have been unsuccessful.

2. Mid-Term and Long-Term Monitoring Program:

- a. Mid-term timeframe extends from years 2026-2027 and monitoring will include strategies as identified in near-term monitoring.
- b. Mid-term annual reports will include summary of strategies which have been unsuccessful to prepare for 2028 Equity Assessment update.