

Local Governments, Social Equity, and Sustainable Communities

ADVANCING SOCIAL EQUITY GOALS TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABILITY

CASE STUDY SERIES



ADVANCING SOCIAL EQUITY
in Manatee County,
Florida



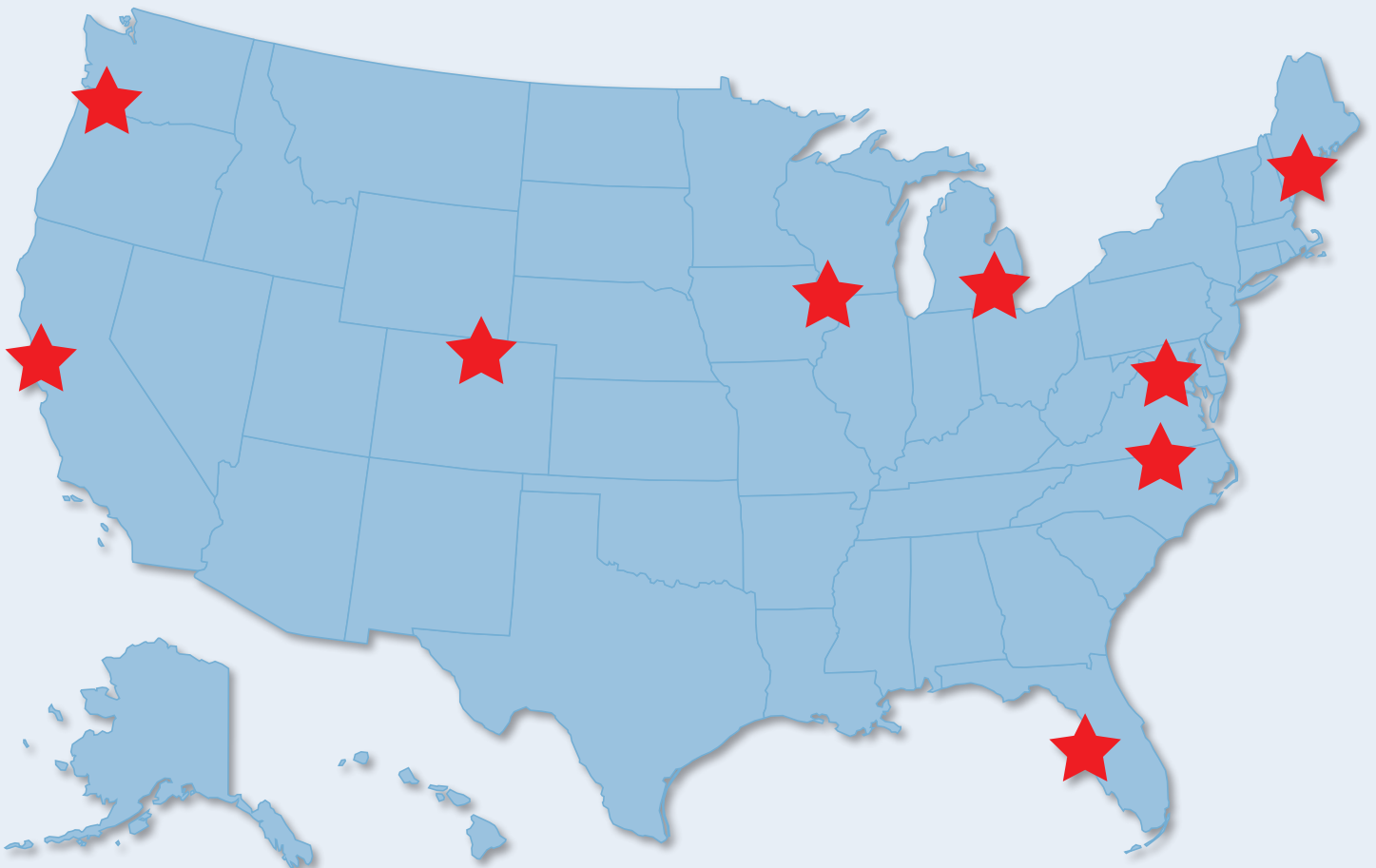
ICMA

ABOUT THIS PROJECT: ADVANCING SOCIAL EQUITY GOALS TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABILITY

This research was conducted by ICMA and Arizona State University to identify and describe current activities, leading practices, and achievements of sustainable communities created through a comprehensive, integrated approach supported by inclusive engagement. Based on results of the ICMA Sustainability Survey in 2010, a follow-up survey was sent to 300 local governments whose original responses showed high levels of sustainability activity. Using results from the follow-up survey and primary and secondary research on leading social sustainability practices around the United States, nine communities whose responses indicated high levels of social equity-related activity were selected for case studies. Case study communities include the following:*

- Washtenaw County, MI (Pop. 344,791) and Ann Arbor, MI (Pop. 113,934)
- Dubuque, IA (Pop. 57,637)
- Hayward, CA (Pop. 144,186)
- Manatee County, FL (Pop. 322,833)
- Lewiston, ME (Pop. 36,592)
- Durham, NC (Pop. 228,330)
- Arlington, VA (Pop. 207,627)
- Clark County, WA (425,363)
- Fort Collins, CO (Pop. 143,986)

Each case study details findings from individual communities that provide insight into how they have been able to promote social equity and achieve greater social sustainability through their policies, programs, and other activities. Data was collected primarily through face-to-face interviews and secondary sources.



*Populations based on 2010 Census base.

Advancing Social Equity Goals to Achieve Sustainability: Case Study Series

Advancing Social Equity in Manatee County, Florida

By Katherine Takai, ICMA

In this Report

Community Profile	2
Findings in Brief.....	3
History of Sustainability and Social Equity in Manatee County, Florida	4
Findings	6
List of Study Participants	16
Endnotes	17

Community Profile

- **Form of Government:** Commission-Administrator
- **County Commission:** Seven commissioners
- **Demographic Information (2012):**
 - **Total Population:** 322,833
 - **Poverty Rate:** 13.6%
- **Annual Budget (FY2013):** \$1,005,910,713 county-wide total budgeted expenditures
- **Sustainability Plans and Strategies:**
 - The Manatee County Five-Year Consolidated Plan for Program Years 2012/2013-2016/2017 identifies strategies for affordable housing, prevention of homelessness, ensuring fair housing, expanding economic opportunities, improving neighborhoods, and other social-equity-related initiatives. The plan guides spending of approximately \$1.5 M in CDGB funds and \$450K in HOME Investment Partnerships Program funds annually from U.S. HUD.
 - *How We Will Grow* came about from the challenges that arose from the boom and bust economy in 2008-2012. The plan examined infrastructure as assets in determining how to write policy to encourage growth through community conversations. The original plan was created through solicitation of community input through over 45 presentations to the public and groups in 2012 and 2013.
- **Major Components of Sustainability Plans:** The county's Five-Year Consolidated Plan includes section for housing, homelessness, community development, and non-homeless special needs
- **Number of Sustainability Staff:** No staff specifically dedicated to sustainability.
- **Location in Government:** Most social equity-related activities are located within the Human Services division of the Community Services Department and Neighborhood Services Department, broadly dedicated to improving community through Economic Development, Community Development, Libraries, and Neighborhood Planning. Staff in Neighborhood Services frequently partner with staff in other departments within the County, as well other nonprofits, businesses, and other stakeholders in and around Manatee County.
- **Major Social Equity Activities in the Community:** Neighborhood development, affordable housing, job creation, gang and graffiti prevention, complete streets, food access, community healthcare, library programs, natural resources programs, recycling

Findings in Brief

Leadership

- FINDING 1 — Leadership on social equity-related initiatives can be fostered in all areas of local government staff; and social service-oriented staff is required for success in social equity-related initiatives.

Partnerships

- FINDING 2 – Partnering with strong community coalitions – both formal and informal – and promoting socially cohesive culture can result in focused efforts to solve specific social equity-related issues facing the community.
- FINDING 3 – Day-to-day management of community-based social equity efforts do not need to reside solely with the local government. Often private sector and community nonprofits can handle such programs more effectively.

Programs & Policies

- FINDING 4 – Federal and state-level grant funding opportunities and policies enable strategic planning and policy development for social equity within local government departments.
- FINDING 5 – Renewed focus on sustainable growth and improved quality of life for residents of the county have led to neighborhood-level development of distressed areas of the community, where many low-income residents reside.
- FINDING 6 – Communicating the value of investment in social sustainability often requires a bottom-line focused approach and consideration of long-term benefits.

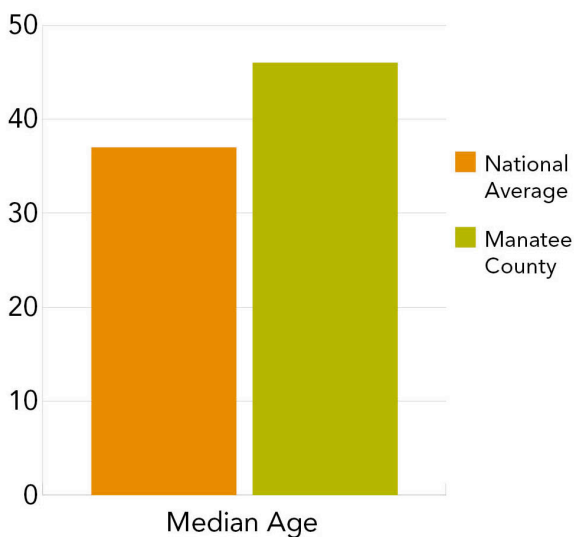
Performance Measures

- FINDING 7 – Data should guide targeted efforts in low-income neighborhoods, particularly in challenges related to Community Health.

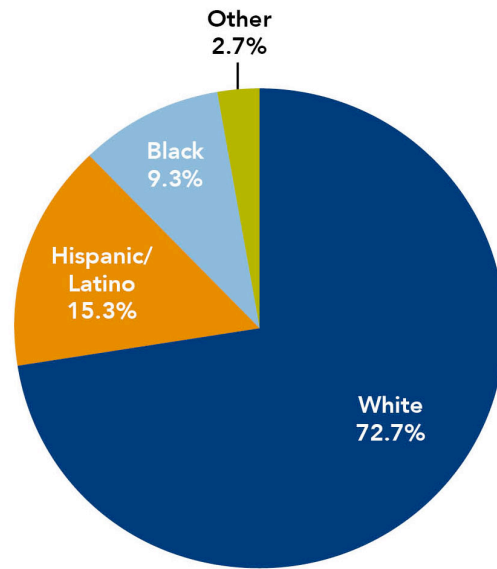
History of Sustainability and Social Equity in Manatee County, Florida

A commitment to “doing the right thing” and improving the quality of life for all citizens of Manatee County has been a priority for government staff and elected officials, community groups, businesses, and residents. Located along the west coast of Florida, the County has six municipalities, each with diverse populations and distinct characters and identities. Four of the six communities are located on barrier islands with the largest two municipalities located on the mainland.

Average Age (2010)



Population by Race (2010)



The County has seen strong, continuous population growth for the past 100 years, and anticipates continued growth for the next 18 years. The County has a year-round population of 330,000; seasonal or recreational visitors from November to April increase the population size by an estimated 30%.ⁱ The age structure is significantly older in Manatee County than the rest of the United States, as the average median age was 45.7 years compared to the national average of 37.2 years in 2010. The racial makeup of the county is approximately 72.7% White, 15.3% Hispanic or Latino, and 9.3% Black or African American according to 2012 U.S. Census estimates. Minority populations and low-income residents reside most heavily around the two largest communities, the cities of Palmetto and Bradenton.ⁱⁱ

Efforts to make Manatee County a vibrant and attractive community that serves all geographic areas and demographic groups, specifically those that have greatest need for social services, come from local government and collaborations with organizations, coalitions, and businesses. The county’s Neighborhood Services (see organizational chart on page one) is the internal department that exists “to support and enhance the quality of life for all of Manatee County’s residents and visitors.”

³ The department is divided into Economic Development, Community Development, Libraries and Neighborhood Planning subsections, and administers federal grants, including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME affordable housing grant, Neighborhood Stabilization, and Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Programs. The Neighborhood Services Department focuses on most of the programs related to social sustainability, but programs located within other departments also address social equity as well. For example transportation and land conservation programs and policies focus on providing greater access to all residents of communities, especially disadvantaged populations. Other departments, including Community Health and the County Police, have programs that focus on low-income and at-risk groups. The Neighborhood Services Department's Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) was created to meet requirements for CDBG funding and includes strategic plans, goals, and objectives related to housing and community development priorities. It also defines how the county intends to achieve greater social equity. Public input for the CAPER is collected through public meetings held in the first quarter of the calendar year and ongoing during the comment period at the county's six public libraries.

Initiatives related to social equity have been frequently championed on an issue-specific basis through the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), local government staff, and community organizations. Homelessness emerged as an issue in the 1980s; and the need to reduce expenditures in expensive public systems such as law enforcement, judiciary, hospitals, and jails provided impetus for strategic planning in this area. The 10-Year Plan to End Chronic Homeless in Manatee, Florida, released in August 2006 outlined steps, outcomes, and a detailed work group plan developed by the whole community and supported by the City of Bradenton and Manatee County Government.⁴ Focus on provision of health-related services for all members of the community is also a priority.

The economic downturn had a significant negative effect on the county from 2007-2011. As a result, the county has looked at its growth more carefully. In 2012, the county's Building and Development Services department took the lead in creation of the "How Will We Grow" report, which includes recommendations for policy to guide more strategic land use and infrastructure planning. As a result, the Board of County Commissioners decided to allocate resources for the redevelopment of the southwest area of the county along with areas with more dense and concentrated growth. The southwest area in Manatee County is generally older, with high concentrations of low-income and minority communities. The economic downturn has also provided an impetus for a number of other equity-related initiatives, specifically in response to the need for job creation across a spectrum of levels of skills and education. Additionally, it has resulted in more attention being focused on how to provide services for those that need it in the most equitable and cost-effective way possible.

Findings

LEADERSHIP

FINDING 1 — Leadership on social equity-related initiatives can be fostered in all areas of local government staff; and social service-oriented staff is required for success in social equity-related initiatives.

A focus on social inclusion is evident in all levels of local government in Manatee County, as well as in community groups who partner with the county to provide services to residents. The desire to increase social equity is driven by the notion that providing the whole community with equal opportunity to grow – despite differing circumstances – increases overall quality of life for citizens and cultivates future resiliency as the community grows. The county administrator has a broad vision for social sustainability as it impacts economic viability and greater business opportunities for the area beyond primarily residential with little commercial activity. This vision guides staff to take a holistic approach to future growth within the county that focuses on ensuring equal opportunities for all residents moving forward.

Leadership in promoting social equity within the county is also evident within internal county departments. The Neighborhood Services department has numerous initiatives that focus on social inclusion and equal opportunity; but other individual departments also emphasize social inclusion as a result of socially conscious leadership. The Parks and Natural Resources Department offers a variety of educational programs, offered at no or low cost in order to gain participation from as many community members as possible. Primary partners for sharing information about available programs and activities are public and private school systems, after school programs, and adult education programs. Targeted outreach to disadvantaged communities is also done through the provision of promotional materials in Spanish to encourage a segment of Hispanic residents to take advantage of programs and services. These efforts are guided by the philosophy of the Director of the Parks and Natural Resources Department, Charlie Hunsicker, and supported by the Board of County Commissioners. “It [efforts to encourage all members of the community to participate] gives us access to different perspectives and ideas, and those perspectives teach us while we teach them. To encourage that with free offerings and programs is a way we have found to reach out to our community,” Hunsicker explained.

The Recycling Program administered out of the Solid Waste Division aims to outreach to and encourage all members of the community to participate in recycling a number of different solid waste materials they collect. This outreach is largely driven by a 75% goal recycling rate by 2020, which was set by the State of Florida in 2008. The department has published a detailed guide for commercial entities and a residential guide printed in both English and Spanish. Educational information is provided on the radio, TV, billboards, and at numerous events throughout the community. The department tracks events and attends a variety of different types of events in order to ensure that they are reaching out to as many areas of the community as possible. The Division

also partners with Keep Manatee Beautiful, a nonprofit organization dedicated to litter prevention, beautification, and environmental improvement through leadership in community awareness, education, and involvement.⁵

Relationship to SE Goals: Although a direct statement of valuing inclusivity in service provision is not explicitly stated, operationalizing a vision for social equity from the leadership level – trickling down from the chief administrator to department directors to department staff – has resulted in greater understanding and consideration of social equity in local government planning and service delivery.

Challenges: It is difficult to define, coordinate and sustain efforts without institutionalizing social equity values through programs and policies. As staff turnover and new staff come on board, the vision for social equity will need to be continually cultivated. Hiring socially conscious staff with an understanding of social equity and its importance and ensuring that the population diversity of the county is represented on staff facilitates greater capacity to improve social equity.

PARTNERSHIPS

FINDING 2 – Partnering with strong community coalitions – both formal and informal – and promoting socially cohesive culture can result in focused efforts to solve specific social equity-related issues facing the community.

According to Deputy Administrator, Karen Windon, a positive result of greater social inclusion is more active and cohesive coalitions, both formal and informal, organized to address issues and give a voice to them.

The county's partnership with the Manatee County Chamber of Commerce in addressing an indigent healthcare issue funding shortage that threatens to severely affect the low-income segment of the population has led to the establishment of the Manatee Healthcare Alliance. Since 1984, the county has administered the Manatee County Healthcare System to provide monies for indigent care and other health-related purposes within Manatee County.⁶ This was in accordance with Federal Laws requiring hospitals to provide care to individuals experiencing urgent and/or life threatening medical circumstances regardless of ability to pay. Initial funds came largely from the sale of a publicly-owned hospital, Manatee Memorial; and funds were expected to be sustainable for twenty years. Since 1984, ordinances were updated to create the Manatee County Health Care Fund for indigent health care and efforts have been made to streamline the process and include additional providers. Although the fund was meant to be self-sustaining, interest rates are only a fraction of what is needed to sustain the costs; thus the fund is projected to run out sometime in 2015.⁷

The Chamber has over 430 members who participate on 25 committees and task forces that focus on a number of issues facing the community and improving quality of life for its residents. In 2007, the Chamber provided funds for the Manatee County Healthcare Study to identify the county's most significant challenges in health care, from service delivery to financing. In 2009, the Chamber moved forward to implement recommendations from the study by forming a Healthcare Committee. The

Chamber of Commerce spearheaded the formation of the Manatee County Health Care Alliance (MCHCA), comprised of every major health care player, including many specialist and health care providers, with the goal of introducing a new way for the county to treat, implement, and pay for health care for those who cannot afford it with the approaching fund depletion. In 2013, residents voted against approval of a 0.5% sales tax increase to cover a \$9 million shortfall. The MCHCA continues to seek the most effective community solutions to address this and related healthcare challenges because it is “critical for the health of the community, including the physical health, mental health, and economic health.”⁸

Relationship to SE goals: Formation of organizations around social equity-related initiatives within the community was largely attributable to the focus of the Manatee Chamber of Commerce and area businesses on community improvement. The American Chamber of Commerce Executives awarded Manatee with the honor of National Chamber of the Year for its demonstrated commitment. The provision of healthcare relates to other goals listed in the Consolidated Plan, as well as the mission statement of the Manatee County Department of Health to “protect, promote, and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county, and community efforts.”⁹

Challenges: Despite efforts to raise more funds for indigent healthcare funds, voting against a recent tax hike for this purpose indicates that additional outreach and education on the importance of these types of initiatives may be necessary.

FINDING 3 – Day-to-day management of community-based social equity efforts do not need to reside solely with the local government. Often private sector and community nonprofits can handle such programs more effectively.

Under leadership of prior County Commissions and Administrators, departments within the county government provided social services and therefore were responsible for addressing social equity-related challenges. A new approach wherein the county plays more of the role of a convener around these issues was taken with the economic downturn and arrival of a new county administrator in 2007. The new model for providing many social services in Manatee County is contracting to address needs in the most cost-effective way. Other funding from foundations and local businesses also contribute to social equity-related programs that collaborate with the county.

Affordable Housing programs, including local, state, and federal, are administered through the Neighborhood Services Department’s Community Development Office. These programs primarily focus on providing sustainable, affordable housing for the low-income and elderly population of the community. One of their programs is the Impact Fee Program, a voluntary incentive program that offsets increasing cost of impact fees by freezing some county impact fees at 2005 rates and covering the rest through the county’s general revenue funds. Results of the program include construction of 208 affordable housing units through participation of 21 builders. For units that have been inspected for compliance, verified, sold, and meet certain criterion on price and income of homebuyers, permit and/or planning development fees are refunded to allow cost-savings to be

passed onto consumers. Partnerships with private builders and community groups have been integral to the success of affordable housing programs, and they will continue to be as Manatee County meets the needs of new segments of the community, such as individuals with disabilities and veterans. Habitat for Humanity is an example of a critical partner in affordable housing efforts and other initiatives within Manatee County, given a shifting focus on more comprehensive neighborhood revitalization and stabilization.

“This new focus on neighborhood revitalization has changed the way I look at the community. Now we’re looking at neighborhoods – streets and blocks - with the county, particularly going into its southern area, which is struggling. Habitat can look at that community and ask how we can be part of efforts to the revitalize that community and what we can bring to the table to help.” explained Diana Shoemaker, Executive Director of Manatee County Habitat for Humanity, “It fits in our vision to be part of that.”

Habitat for Humanity supports the use of county impact fee refunds, provides down-payment assistance for home buyers, builds and refurbishes housing for low-income families. In 2010, Habitat facilitated the placement of 18 families into energy efficient housing units within the CDBG-supported Hope Landing greenbelt community. Partnerships in affordable housing include the United Way, which provides targeted funding for low-income housing initiatives, and the Palmetto Community Redevelopment Agency and other CRAs that assist in identification of homes in need of repairs and also provide funding. Partnerships have resulted in benefits for individuals with disabilities, the elderly, and other members of the community requiring accommodations to access necessary services. Through Handy Bus, a service provided by Manatee County Area Transit, Habitat has been able to identify families in need of wheelchair ramps to get to their curbsides and access the service.

In an increasingly technological world where a critical wealth of information and opportunities are readily available to those with computers and internet, those without access face significant obstacles to economic and social inclusion. An example of collaborative efforts in social inclusion between the county, the local community foundation, schools, and other private organizations is the Connect Your Community (CYC) initiative to increase internet access for all community members. CYC was a federal grant program hosted by the Manatee Community Foundation to increase internet access to all residents. From September 2010 to June 2012, the program helped over 1,100 households purchase computers from local vendors, offered over 1,800 digital literacy courses, and verified over 1,650 Sustainable Broadband Adopters. The program created nine new computer labs and upgraded four labs at public libraries, resource centers, churches, Boys and Girls Clubs, and other community centers across the county.¹⁰ CYC partnered with the School District of Manatee County and created mailing lists of households where students were on free or reduced lunch status as the primary method of outreach about programs offered. A number of local businesses were engaged in the efforts, such as Brighthouse Networks, a local small business that provided internet service at a discounted rate to graduates of the digital literacy program. CYC’s assistance in providing computer

labs and access to internet for residents across the county have supported the libraries significantly, whose budget has and continues to diminish.

Manatee County Libraries offer comprehensive services for young children, students, seniors, job-seekers, small business owners, entrepreneurs, and others requiring social services. Library Services is an important partner for many community organizations and local government departments for outreach and education on a range of issues. There are six libraries in Manatee County that provide a population of 327,000 with library services in-person and virtually through online services. Programs are held for every age and income level through a variety of partnerships with nonprofits, businesses, other Manatee County departments, and other municipalities. For example, Library Services recently partnered with Sarasota County in a library fine forgiveness program.

“We ask anyone to come in if they can help,” said Eva Ehde, Library Services Manager, “I don’t think any of us feel any shame or compunction because we’re all at the same point and the more we partner, the more we find that people are thrilled with the opportunities offered – whether it’s the schools we work with, which is a very natural partnership, or a partnership with LECOM (Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine) where interns in their third year of pharmacy school work under supervision of a county pharmacist to guide elderly people in managing their medications.”

Relationship to SE goals: Affordable housing initiatives align with goals written in the Five-Year Consolidated Plan, as funding primarily comes from federal grants, such as the CDBG and Neighborhood Assistance Grants. Library Services and the programs it partners with, such as CYC, supports many of the initiatives of the Neighborhood Services departments and Consolidated Plan directly in expanding economic opportunity through training in skills for job creation and retention for low-income persons and empowerment and self-sufficiency.

Challenges: While there are intentional approaches to social equity, they are not intentionally cohesive. Different departments, organizations, and coalitions focus on their individual components related to increasing access to community services and opportunities; so service gaps and opportunities for greater efficiency may exist.

POLICIES & PROGRAMS

FINDING 4 – Federal and state-level grant funding opportunities and policies enable strategic planning and policy development for social equity within local government departments.

Spearheaded by the Neighborhood Services Department, the Consolidated Plan for 2012-2017 required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is the primary guidance on social equity-related goals, objectives, and strategies in Manatee County. The five-year Consolidated Plan outlines how \$9.75 million in total funding from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) funds will be used in areas required by HUD, including Decent Housing, A Suitable Living Environment, and Expanded Case Study: Advancing Social Equity in Manatee County, Florida

Economic Opportunity.¹¹ The five priorities within the plan were developed through document and plan review, public input, staff input, housing data, demographic data, and other considerations with emphasis on low-income and special needs populations. The Consolidated Plan also considers goals and objectives from the 10-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness written in August of 2006.

Manatee County Area Transit (MCAT) is the sole major public transportation service available in the county and administered by the the department of public works. Readily accessible, intermodal means of mobility for those who want to use services is emphasized. Activities that facilitate accessibility include the Handy Bus, an origin-to-destination service for individuals with disabilities who cannot access the fixed-route system, and reduced/no fare for seniors and persons with disabilities.

In order to comply with the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged requirement, the MCAT Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan, a five-year tactical plan, was approved by Metropolitan Planning Organization's Local Coordinating Board in the summer of 2013. Public input was sought during development of the plan, which outlines the development of the Handybus, service and quality assurance. In order to comply with federal requirements from the Department of Transportation's Title VI Program, the county adopted an updated procedure "to establish a process to properly serve the diverse needs of current and potential transit customers, and continually provide service equity to the communities served and ensure adequate system coverage."¹² Having staff in the department with an understanding of changing federal requirements has helped improve the quality of services.

Relationship to SE goals: Strategic planning has enabled individual departments within the county to set goals related to social equity and strategies to reach them.

Challenges: Since this type of federal and state-level funding for strategy are tied to specific programs, like CDBG, the goals, objectives, and strategy are primarily tied to one county department, for example Neighborhood Development. While contracting out and distributing funding from these types of programs do encourage collaborative activity across the community (engaging nonprofits, business, and other stakeholders interested in specific issues), these programs do not directly cross-cut internal local government departments. Local governments need to communicate and collaborate internally in addition to engaging external partners.

FINDING 5 – Renewed focus on sustainable growth and improved quality of life for residents of the county have led to neighborhood-level development of distressed areas of the community, where many low-income individuals reside.

Despite job loss and property devaluation caused by the economic downturn, the crisis drew attention to unsustainable practices in community development that had been trending prior to 2005. "How Will We Grow? A Conversation with the Community" was a strategic planning process catalyzed by the economic downturn between 2007 and 2011. To create the plan, the Building and

Development Services Department spearheaded efforts to collect community input, review past development and land use plans, and develop three alternative approaches to growth. The first alternative was “business-as-usual,” which would allow development to continue to be built out as approved. The second sought denser growth and infill development, and the third focused on areas that were already growing. In consultation with the Urban Land Institute, staff received approval to move forward with a hybrid of two alternatives that included initially focusing development and resources on the West County, an urbanized area with asset-based economic potential, but also significant blight. This area, specifically in Southwest/Bradenton was considered top priority for immediate investment in order to stabilize property values and stimulate private property investments.¹³

“The new goal in community redevelopment is to increase density and intensity to improve quality of life in an area,” said Kathleen Thompson, Planning Manager for Comprehensive Planning of Building Services.

Additional initiatives to revitalize distressed areas of the community support the formation and operation of neighborhood associations. In 2007, the county administrator created the Neighborhood Planning Division. The division was designed to empower and guide neighborhood associations to improvement through fostering partnerships, asset-based mapping, enhanced communication, disaster preparedness, and strengthening communities.¹⁴ The division links associations to agencies, municipalities, and nearly every single department of the county, including community health and the sheriff’s department, to provide a one-stop shop for social services. They also release a comprehensive monthly newsletter to share information.

Relationship to SE Goals: The “How We Will Grow” Plan will reverse the trend of sprawling development to achieve greater density, make better use of existing infrastructure, enhance service delivery, and create a more livable community with access to jobs, commerce, entertainment, and other amenities that residents believe would improve their quality of life with consideration for long-term financial viability. Recommendations for targeted investment that were supported by the Building and Planning Services Department and approved by the BOCC considered ensuring equal opportunity on par with protecting the natural environment and increasing per-capita prosperity.¹⁵ The creation of the Neighborhood Planning Department offers access to resources for all community residents, and encourages development of neighborhoods in need, specifically in the urban core, by offering of incentives in enterprise zones.

Challenges: In the political sphere, controversy over targeting funds to low-income and/or downtown areas of the community exists. Historically, development has trended outwards into greenfield areas; and there is a segment of the population who supports this. Competition exists between focusing development on new, modern developments on the outskirts of the city and in older, blighted neighborhoods located in the urban core. Data-driven recommendations will be critical in providing justification for increased investment in distressed neighborhoods.

FINDING 6 – Communicating the value of investment in social sustainability often requires a bottom-line focused approach and consideration of long-term benefits.

Social equity paired with economic sustainability can provide a more widely understood justification for investing in social sustainability. Investing in social equity efforts that seek to move people with fewer resources or opportunity towards greater self-sufficiency ultimately reduces greater costs to taxpayers through less need for alternative, higher cost-items like emergency healthcare. For many planning considerations, the economic benefits of targeting investments in more depressed areas provides substantial justification for investing when market research can produce the numbers. For example, “How We Will Grow” justifies investment in existing urban areas as opposed to outward growth through projected return on investment. ULI’s analysis of the alternatives presented in the “How Will We Grow” report considers the unique assets of each area in order to recommend a region for targeted investment and development.

The affordable housing program has effectively justified higher costs for better quality and greater long-term sustainability. Over the years, affordable housing has moved toward requiring more green building practices, such as installing air conditioning units that are energy efficient and adding insulation. Additionally, since 1965, the county has been impacted by fifteen storm events so severe that federal resources were needed for recovery.¹⁶ As a result, hurricane impact installation has also become standard for affordable housing units. Despite the higher costs associated with these measures, the impetus behind the practice is to ensure that housing remain affordable for those living in the house, specifically the low-income and elderly persons who make up the majority of individuals served by the program. For example, energy efficient appliances, some certified as ENERGY STAR by the US EPA, helped to keep electricity costs down and easy maintenance alleviates higher future maintenance costs.

“Our initial investment costs are higher because we do these additional things,” said Suzie Dobbs, Community Development Manager of Manatee County Neighborhood Services, “[Hurricane] impact resistant windows are much more expensive than regular windows, but an 84-year-old lady cannot put up shutters by herself. If she’s lucky, she might have family who can help her with that; but why not spend the extra money to ensure that house is manageable, efficient, and sustainable for her?” Through consideration of the consumers – low income families, many with young children, and the elderly – and what their needs are, the program has successfully ensured that people can afford to stay in their homes.

Relationship to SE Goals: Effectively communicating the benefits of investment in affordable housing for long-term sustainability, investment in sustainable growth, and other social equity-related initiatives is necessary to maintain required resources and support for housing residents of all income levels and offering equal opportunity for living and working in Manatee County. The effectiveness of the affordable housing program is directly related to many of the goals listed in the Consolidated Plan in serving the needs of low-income, elderly populations, and persons with disabilities.

Challenges: Outreach to and education of the population about the value of social equity-related initiatives is an ongoing process in Manatee County that staff and stakeholders will need to continue to work on.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

FINDING 7 – Data should guide targeted efforts in low-income neighborhoods, particularly in challenges related to Community Health.

The mission statement of the Florida Department of Health in Manatee County is “to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county, and community efforts.”¹⁷ Through a study by the Health Council of West Central Florida conducted in July and August of 2012, Food Access was identified as a priority. The Manatee County Health Department has recently focused on “food deserts” or areas where people have limited access to a variety of healthy, affordable food.¹⁸ The county has several of these food deserts located throughout the region. Efforts to address this issue include the establishment of a farmer’s market, promotion of area farm stands, and technical assistance to ensure compliance with requirements to allow use of Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT). Currently, the county health department is targeting the issue of food insecurity in a lower income area of the county and a food desert located in the City of Palmetto. They are improving the community gardens and exploring opportunities for establishing a farmers market in Palmetto. Additionally, a Food Desert Committee has been created to review the issue of access to food across the county. They plan to use GIS mapping tools in order to update the current map originally produced in 2010. The county health department has been able to use available data and tools for measuring performance in addressing other health issues as well. Examples are as follows:

- Florida Community Health Assessment Resources Tool Set (CHARTS) provides a one-stop-site for county-level health data on a number of health-related indicators in the categories of communicable diseases,
- The Center for Disease Control’s Community Health Assessment and Group Evaluation (CHANGE) tool allows service providers to track indicators related to risk factors for chronic disease, including nutrition, physical activity, and tobacco use. In 2010, Manatee County became an ACHIEVE (Action Communities for Health, Innovation, and Environmental Change) community by establishing a coalition of individuals from various communities sectors to use yearly assessments compiled from available data to be used in a Community Action Plan.
- County Health Rankings done by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are used to track performance; however this indicator is slower to show results.

Relationship to SE: For departments and service providers that have useful performance measures accessible, data helps target and improve quality of service to meet goals and objectives and regularly achieve more ambitious goals.

Challenges: Community Health has had the most apparent success in developing performance measures in this area. To measure progress in social equity-related initiatives, local government staff and other stakeholders reported using surveys, anecdotal evidence, ongoing complaint and feedback processes with staff and residents, attendance at events and in programs, printed materials distributed, readership, or progress towards overarching goals, such as Manatee County Recycling Program's progress toward meeting the 75% recycling goal set by the State of Florida. There was some desire expressed for further development of performance measurement on initiatives, specifically in potentially setting benchmarks for the How We Will Grow project.

List of Study Participants

The author of this report conducted interviews with 21 individuals familiar with social equity-related activities in Manatee County. The author wishes to thank the following individuals for their contributions:

- Charlie Bishop, property management department director
- Darryl Blair, energy management
- Chad Butzow, public works deputy director
- Sargent Gary Combee, chief of sheriff's Gang Suppression Unit
- Cheri Coryea, Neighborhood Services department director
- Debbie Deleon, Neighborhood Services coordinator
- Jackie Dezelski, VP community development, Manatee Chamber of Commerce
- Suzie Dobbs, community development manager
- Ava Ehde, Library Services manager
- Michael Gallen, county commissioner – District Two
- Charlie Hunsicker, parks and natural resources department director
- Megan Jourdan, health educator media liaison, Florida Department of Health (Manatee County)
- Sherry Knowles, “Connect Your Community” program director
- David Pickup, special waste manager, solid waste division
- Casey Rodgers, VP Financial and Strategic Planning, Feld Entertainment
- Brenda Rogers, community services department director
- Dan Schlandt, deputy county administrator
- Diana Shoemaker, executive director, Manatee County Habitat for Humanity
- David Thompson, building services manager
- Kathleen Thompson, planning manager, Building and Development Services
- Karen Windon, deputy county administrator

Endnotes

- ⁱ Manatee County, Florida. *Five-Year Consolidated Plan 2012/2017 Program Years*.
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- ⁱⁱ Low income is defined as less than 50% of Area Median Income.
- ³ Manatee County, Florida. *Neighborhood Services*.
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- ⁴ “Voices – A 10-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness in Manatee County, Florida.” August 2006.
<http://www.mymanatee.org/dms/departments/neighborhood-services/community-development/ManateeCountyPlan081406finaldraft/Voices-10%20year%20plan%20to%20end%20homelessness.pdf>
- ⁵ <http://manateebeautiful.com/>
- ⁶ Manatee County Community Services. “History of Indigent Health Care Funding.” March 6, 2013.
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- ⁷http://www.thebradentontimes.com/news/2013/03/01/local_government/manatee_county_moves_forward_to_remedy_indigent_healthcare_costs/
- ⁸ Ibid. History of Indigent Healthcare Funding
- ⁹ Florida Department of Health in Manatee County. <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdmanatee/>
- ¹⁰ CYC Manatee Accomplishments. September 2010-June 2012.
- ¹¹ Manatee County Consolidated Plan 2012-2017.
- ¹² Manatee County, Florida Board of County Commissioners Transit Division Procedures Manual. MCAT Major Service Modification Procedure. Procedure # 12-0401. June 4, 2013.
- ¹³ Urban Land Institute Advisory Services. Manatee County Florida Panel Report. March 17-22, 2013.
- ¹⁴ Manatee County. FAQ. <https://www.mymanatee.org/home/government/departments/neighborhood-services/neighborhood-planning/Frequently-Asked-Questions.html>
- ¹⁵ Urban Land Institute Advisory Services. Manatee County Florida Panel Report. March 17-22, 2013.
- ¹⁶ FloridaDisaster.org: Florida Division of Emergency Management. Post Disaster Redevelopment Plan (PDRP): Case Study Manatee County.
<http://www.floridadisaster.org/Recovery/IndividualAssistance/pdredevelopmentplan/documents/Toolbox/CaseStudyManatee.pdf>
- ¹⁷ Florida Department of Health in Manatee County Home Page. <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdmanatee/>
- ¹⁸ Dutko, Paul; Ver Ploeg, Michele; and Tracey Farrigan. “Characteristics and Influential Factors of Food Deserts.” United States Department of Agriculture: Economic Research Service. August 2012.

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