

TAMPA-ST. PETE

2022 LEADERSHIP VISIT SUMMARY REPORT



PRESENTED BY:



TAMPA-ST. PETE 2022

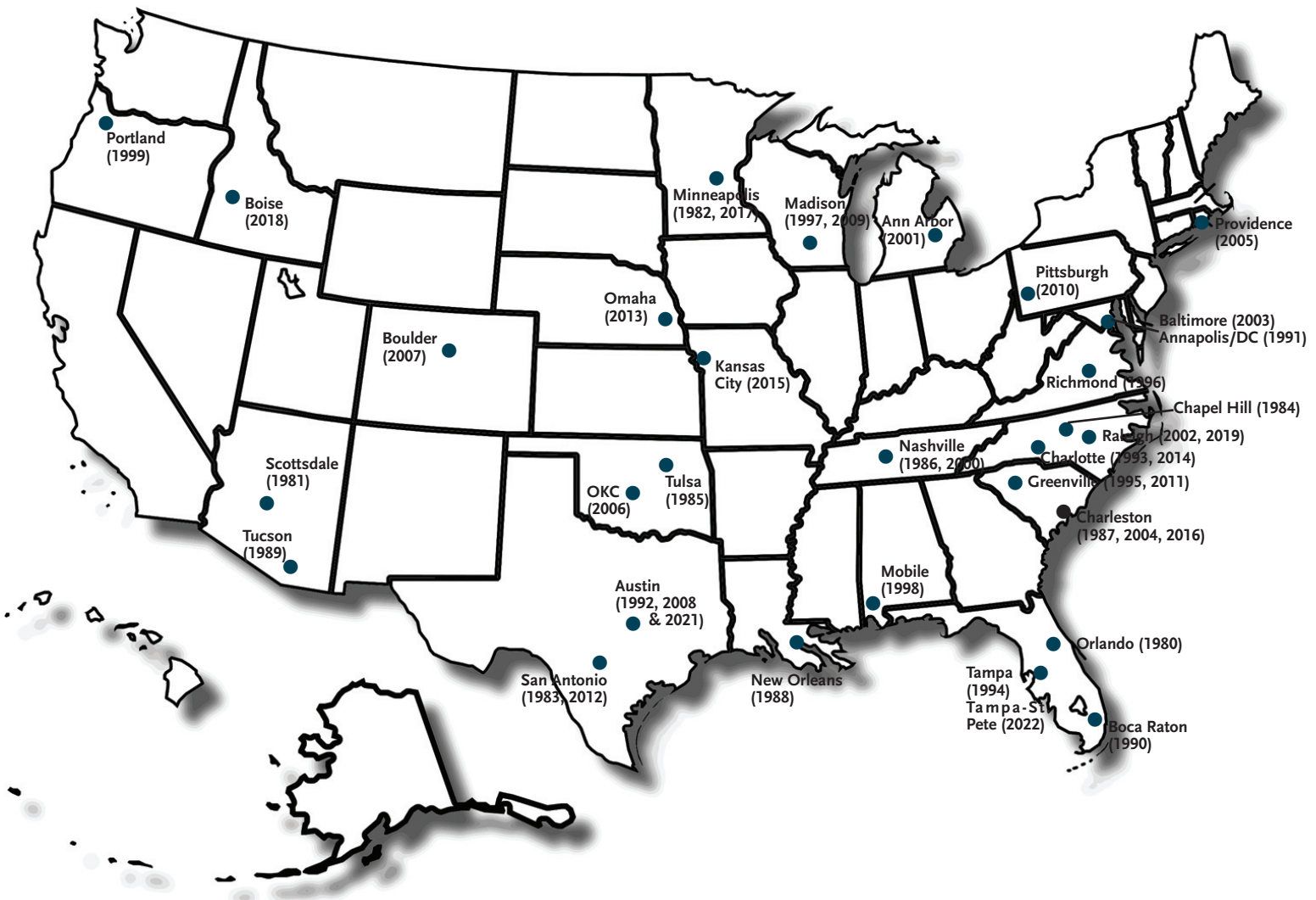
About 150 community leaders studied the Tampa-St. Petersburg, Florida region during Commerce Lexington's **2022 Leadership Visit presented by Central Bank & Trust Co.** The group spent the opening day in Tampa hearing from elected and community leaders. Participants got a look at Armature Works, a mixed-use commercial space that includes The Heights Public Market, as well as Sparkman Wharf, a dynamic outdoor entertainment venue.

While in St. Petersburg, the delegation heard sessions covering equity, regional planning, placemaking, and talent development. A variety of elective activities included an afternoon exploring downtown St. Petersburg, a tour of Ybor City in Tampa, a kayak excursion of Shell Key, and more. The signature Bank Reception and Dinner was held at The Urban

Stillhouse by Horse Soldier located in St. Pete's Warehouse Arts District. Horse Soldier Bourbon will soon build a production plant in Pulaski County, Kentucky.

One of the longest-running and largest intercity visits of its kind among chambers of commerce and economic development groups nationally, Commerce Lexington's annual Leadership Visit has influenced many community initiatives and programs, such as the Access Loan small business financing program, Coldstream Research Park, the wildly-popular Thursday Night Live, enhancements in our trail system, improvements in Fayette County Public Schools facilities, and the award-winning EMERGE conference for emerging leaders.

LEADERSHIP VISITS SINCE 1980



THE TAMPA STORY

Tampa Mayor Jane Castor

Tampa Mayor Jane Castor kicked off the 2022 Commerce Lexington Leadership Visit to Tampa-St. Petersburg, Florida, by welcoming the delegation at Armature Works, a 73,000-square foot mixed-use commercial space consisting of The Heights Public Market, multiple event spaces, a co-shared workspace, as well as multiple restaurants and bars. Born and raised in Tampa, Mayor Castor has spent a lifetime in service to the community, first as a police officer, then as Tampa's first female Chief of Police, and finally as the city's 59th Mayor.



Photo by Bill Straus Photography

Mayor Castor mentioned that Clearwater and St. Pete beaches are consistently ranked in the top ten, while St. Petersburg has an eclectic downtown area with a lot of museums and a great food scene, and then "I like to say that Tampa's got all the rest." Tourism has come back to the area, as Mayor Castor noted that most Tampa hotels are at 95% to 97% capacity on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. She said they really market themselves as a region.

Like Lexington's economy, Mayor Castor mentioned that Tampa's diverse economy is what powered the region through the pandemic. Tampa is known as a financial hub, said Castor, along with strong segments of medical research and biopharmaceuticals, higher education, technology start-ups, manufacturing, and a top-notch airport and the Port of Tampa.

The city of Tampa is a minority-majority city, with the Hispanic/Latino population increasing dramatically. The African American population has declined slightly. "We have such a diverse city, and it's absolutely wonderful," said Castor. Unlike a lot of cities where the population segments are separated by specific neighborhoods, "here everybody lives together," said Castor.

Mayor Castor said that one of the biggest issues right now for Tampa is affordable housing. It is the number one real estate market and third-fastest growing city in the U.S. "We are trying to build as quickly as we can everything from micro-units downtown, single-family, and multi-family high rises. The urban core is growing dramatically."

Castor said they are looking all over the city to see where they can provide affordable housing. She said, "I've talked to all of the developers in the city and have them understand the value of workforce and affordable housing. If you can have your workforce within walking distance of where that job is, that's a win-win for everybody."

Mayor Castor reported that Tampa's transit system is severely underfunded, and they are looking at putting a referendum on the ballot for a penny sales tax that would improve the bus system and provide other modes of transit as well. She said they just started a ferry system that connects Tampa with St. Petersburg. They are doing everything they can to look at the transit options of the future, added Castor.

Workforce development is another key focus of her administration and making sure they are bringing the high-paying jobs to the area. "If 100,000 software engineers walked through the door right now, they would all have jobs. The growth is incredible. Just in the Water Street area, they will see 100,000 new residents and 250,000 new jobs by the year 2040. We're doing workforce development all the way from skilled labor up to the highest tech jobs."

Mayor Castor said that the sustainability and resiliency of the environment and the city's neighborhoods are vital, so she created an Office of Sustainability & Resiliency and put together a task force to develop a long-range plan. "I personally believe that water is going to be the most precious element in the next decade, and we've got to do everything we can to save every drop of water," said Castor. One of her first acts as Mayor was a \$3 billion dollar infrastructure bill called PIPES, which is replacing wastewater pipes throughout the city.

Mayor Castor concluded by saying that "a lot of the problems that we are having are a result of our incredible growth. I'm 62 years old, and I tell everybody that the city is going to change more in the next decade than it has in my entire life. And, to be a small part of that thoughtful and inclusive intentional growth is really an honor of a lifetime for me."



Photo by Bill Straus Photography

THE TAMPA STORY

Craig Richard, President & CEO of Tampa Bay Economic Development Council
Nicholas Glover, Vice President - Advocacy, Tampa Bay Chamber

During a session entitled The Tampa Story, Craig Richard, President and CEO of the Tampa Bay Economic Development Council, and Nic Glover, the Tampa Bay Chamber's Vice President of Advocacy, delved into some of the key issues facing the Tampa area for the future, including rapid growth, housing affordability, equity, and more. As a certified economic developer with over two decades of economic development leadership experience in major markets such as Dallas, Houston and Atlanta, Mr. Richard previously spent time as president and CEO of Greater Louisville Inc. He has been with the Tampa Bay EDC for six years.

Mr. Richard said that the area was already experiencing population growth before the pandemic, but when the pandemic hit, it accelerated moves from the East Coast and Midwest. The main feeder markets for the in-migration were Chicago, New York and New Jersey. Now, there's even movement from the West Coast and Texas.

From an economic development standpoint, Mr. Richard said that the area has big challenges with infrastructure and housing. A recent competitiveness study showed that one of Tampa's big advantages was its affordability. However, with the population increasing and demand for housing skyrocketing, Tampa's cost of living is beginning to go up. While Tampa is still competitive with other major markets for office space and real estate, Richard noted that the city is no longer the low-cost center in Florida.

Nic Glover, who leads public policy efforts at the Tampa Bay Chamber of Commerce, is a New York transplant. His initial concerns about job availability and things to do in the Tampa area were quickly dispelled. He said that Tampa has large city amenities with a small-town feel. "Tampa had to figure out what it wanted to be when it grew up," said Glover. "Well, we've grown up, and it seems like we've selected where we want to be," which includes a balance between being a big city and having the hospitality of a small midwestern town.

A recent strategic plan done by the Tampa Chamber called Vision 2026 is a 10-year Vision Plan established by members to ensure the organization continues to move forward and is ready for the future (www.tampabaychamber.com/clientuploads/docs/Vision%2026/vision-plan.pdf). It consists of three pillars, including Be a Hub for Business, Be a Catalyst for Change, and Be an Inclusive Organization.

As a Hub for Business, Glover said the best way to recruit business to the area is to take very good care of Tampa's existing companies, "which means we have the right kind of business climate for them to succeed." As a Catalyst for Change, Glover said, "We believe that when we go outside the organization and do things that are good for the entire community, it has an exponential benefit back to the organization." To Be an Inclusive Organization, Glover said that the chamber needs to be reflective of the diversity within the community.

In the diversity space, the Tampa Chamber started a Minority Business Accelerator (MBA) program in 2019 (www.tampabaychamber.com/pages/mba) designed to assist



Photo by Bill Straus Photography

Black and Hispanic businesses prepare for growth. Now in its fifth cohort of MBA companies, Glover said, "It could not have gone any better. It's absolutely astounding how well these companies are doing." Commerce Lexington launched its Minority Business Accelerator (<https://locateinlexington.com/minority-business-services/minority-business-accelerator>) in 2013 with the participants so far achieving over \$31 million in contracts and procurement since the program's inception.

Mr. Glover noted that Tampa has been through three renaissance periods, including the expansion of the rail system, location of more people and businesses along the Hillsborough River, and the development of a more diverse economy and one that is not based solely on tourism. "So when COVID happens, Florida takes a hit, but cities like Tampa are able to bounce back very quickly because tourism is just one part of the economy."

When asked how or if the two communities (Tampa and St. Pete) work together, Glover said, "We are very much competing as a region for economic opportunities. We have separate governments, and we want to get our fair share just like St. Pete." As a chamber, he said that the Tampa Chamber has an atypical model in that it has a memorandum of understanding with 11 other business associations and chambers that enables them to come together more effectively on issues.

Mr. Richard added, "Tampa is the 800-pound gorilla in the Tampa-St. Pete area. This is by far the commercial center of the region. There are always some innate inferiority complexes with some of the other cities." He mentioned that from an economic development standpoint, the state economic development organization dictates which EDO in a county is the lead economic development organization, so that creates a bit of friction from other city or county EDOs that feel they aren't getting a share of the business leads. However, he added that they work together on projects, travel together, and collaborate on an international trade program.

RE-IMAGINING DOWNTOWN TAMPA

Mary-Kate Michalak, Manager, Corporate Leasing & Strategy, Strategic Property Partners Wade Vaughn, Manager of Strategic Projects, Strategic Property Partners

Following a boat ride along the Hillsborough River, the group arrived at Sparkman Wharf, a dynamic and vibrant development along Tampa Bay's downtown waterfront. It has become one of the top community and cultural destinations in the area, with a blend of loft-style office space and ground-floor retail, along with an intimate dining garden, biergarten, and recreational lawn. During an outdoor session entitled "Re-Imagining Downtown Tampa," Mary-Kate Michalak and Wade Vaughn from Strategic Property Partners talked about the transformation of the downtown area with Sparkman Wharf as the focal point.

Mary-Kate said that both she and Wade grew up in the Tampa area, moved away, and then came back. "That's something we've seen as a trend here – the boomerang kids," she added. "More and more people who have ties to Tampa or used to live here are moving back here, because there's so much opportunity, and there's so many more jobs now. There's a lot going on here."

Sparkman Wharf is a nine million square foot development that began construction in 2018, with Phase I or 4.2 million square feet just about complete. The project is a joint venture between Jeff Vinik, who owns the National Hockey League's Tampa Bay Lightning franchise, and several partners, along with Cascade Investment, the investment firm funded by Bill Gates. Michalak said, "At total completion, we're looking at about a \$3.5 billion dollar investment into this area, and we've deployed closer to \$2 billion just for Phase I." She said they expect to be building out across all phases until the year 2030.

The land where the development is taking place was mostly parking lots and vacant land a few years ago. That's when Mr. Vinik noticed the area's potential around the Lightning's home arena and the waterfront. Michalak mentioned that there are five core pillars that guide the development's process.

- **Wellness:** Similar to LEED certification, which is about the built environment, Well certification is about the people environment. The development is the world's first pre-certified Well neighborhood, meaning there are regular health activities like yoga, monitoring of the air and water quality, and resources for mind and body.
- **Walkability:** "We want to make sure that in this neighborhood, you don't have to get into your car," said Michalak. "You have everything you need within a 15-minute walk."
- **Sustainability:** Being good stewards of the environment.
- **Technology:** Features a universal access network and 5G network throughout the entire 56 acres that is being deployed. You can be on a secured network without ever losing a connection within the 56 acres.
- **Connectivity:** Creating a seamless connection to the surrounding neighborhoods.



Photo by Bill Straus Photography

The development features three hotels with 692 new and 727 renovated hotel rooms, including the city's first five-star hotel, The Tampa EDITION, J.W. Marriott Tampa Water Street, and Tampa Marriott Water Street. These hotels form the largest collection of hotel rooms and meeting spaces (150,000 square feet) in the Tampa Bay area, and all are very close to Amalie Arena, which is the third-most active venue in the country behind Madison Square Garden in New York and the Barclays Center in Brooklyn. There are four options for condominium and apartment living near work, restaurants, shopping, entertainment and nature. People can choose from studio, one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments, all the way up to penthouse living.

The Water Street Neighborhood has an innovative District Cooling facility that produces and distributes cold water, providing sustainable air conditioning to the entire area. That means rooftops that would normally be occupied by air conditioning equipment are freed up with space for rooftop amenities and green space, while reducing the amount of electricity and water used throughout the community.

Water Street Tampa has partnered with local organizations, embracing the city's character and seizing the opportunity to provide effective transportation options, mobility and walkability, innovative cultural and entertainment venues, and educational institutions. Water Street Tampa will continue to enhance the city's profile on the national stage, attracting professionals, residents, and tourists to explore and enjoy the dynamic waterfront neighborhood.

WELCOME TO ST. PETERSBURG

St. Petersburg Mayor Ken Welch

St. Petersburg Mayor Ken Welch kicked off day two of the Leadership Visit with an introduction of some of the key issues facing the city. Mr. Welch was sworn in as the 54th mayor of St. Petersburg on January 6, 2022. A third generation St. Pete resident, Mayor Welch became the first Commissioner elected to represent County Commission District 7 and only the second African American commissioner in the history of Pinellas County. Ken served on the County Commission for 20 years, where he brought a focus to the issues of economic development, transportation, equity, housing, criminal justice reform and fighting poverty.



Mayor Welch touched on a couple of programs addressing justice reform and housing. A program called Pinellas Hope was created to address chronic homelessness in downtown St. Petersburg and as a solution to constantly arresting people. In partnership with the interfaith community, local government, businesses and other not-for-profits, Catholic Charities established Pinellas Hope in 2007 on 10 acres of land located in Clearwater and donated by the Diocese of St. Petersburg with the goal of assisting homeless adults on the streets by providing temporary emergency shelter.

Initially consisting of 250 units of emergency shelter (tents) and little else, Pinellas Hope has grown over the years to include the Pinellas Hope II expansion (2010) which consisted of a community center with permanent offices, (warming) kitchen, meeting rooms (library and computer room), a pavilion/covered dining area, men's and women's bathrooms with showers, and a laundry room. It also included 80 efficiency apartments (including 5 that are ADA-accessible) providing permanent supportive housing to residents of Pinellas Hope to prepare to return to regular housing. Since its formation, Pinellas Hope has served over 10,000 people and served over 1.6 million meals. Read more about this program at <https://pinellashope.org>.

Another program called Pinellas Safe Harbor, which began in 2011, is an emergency homeless shelter and a jail-diversion program designed to be a safe haven for people who are homeless and require services to get back on their feet. Operated by the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office in partnership with several local agencies and organizations, the primary objective of Safe Harbor is to keep the county's homeless population out of the criminal justice system and off the streets. Read more on-line here: www.pcsoweb.com/pinellas-safe-harbor.

Mayor Welch also talked about the success of Pinellas County's Adult Pre-Arrest Diversion Program (APAD), which aims to decrease the number of people booked into the Pinellas County Jail and prosecuted within the Pinellas County Criminal Court System. It keeps people who commit certain misdemeanor offenses from having a criminal record that could interfere with their future employment, acceptance into academic institutions, and avoid housing or occupational licensing problems.

Mayor Welch also mentioned that St. Petersburg has invested in its infrastructure through a one-percent voter approved sales tax (Penny For

Pinellas), which must be approved by voters every ten years. It generates about \$200 million annually for things like libraries, police stations, bridges, etc. It was re-approved in 2017 for another ten years.

He concluded, "The key to many of our successes is focusing on our common goals and then strategically focusing on the best path to achieve those goals. It's worked very well here and has de-politicized a lot of our tough decisions."

Chris Steinocher, President & CEO St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce

Chris Steinocher has been with the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce since 2011. He said that community leaders have worked hard over the years to create a great experience for residents and visitors, including the installation of large umbrellas along Gulf Boulevard to make people want to keep going further along the road and enhance their experience.



When Steinocher returned to the Chamber in 2011, he said that "the Chamber had turned its back on the community," meaning it wasn't working to make the city better or move it forward. So, the first thing they did was create a focus on entrepreneurship. "Can we make St. Pete the best city to start your business, and we believe it is," he said.

A program called The Entrepreneurial Academy® is an eight-week in-person course that teaches existing and future entrepreneurs the essentials of starting and owning a business through The Greenhouse, which is St. Petersburg's front-door to business growth, providing business owners and entrepreneurs with the education, resources and assistance necessary to thrive in the local economy. Comprised of an expert team from the City of St. Petersburg and St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce, The Greenhouse offers a comprehensive list of services for St. Pete's small business community that include, business consulting and mentorship, a professional network impactful signature programs, workshops and more. [<https://stpetegreenhouse.com>]

There is also something called St. Pete Pitch Night, where local entrepreneurs are invited to apply to pitch for a chance to win up to \$5,000! The event focuses on showcasing, elevating and seeding community-based businesses through a friendly pitch competition. [<https://stpetegreenhouse.com/pitch>]

He also mentioned that they didn't want to do things the way that had always been done. Through Grow Smart, they brought together many different segments of the community to create an economic development plan and vision for the future. The community also tackled poverty, and more specifically reducing African American poverty. "We want to be the best place on Earth for everybody," Steinocher added. "Can I start a business in every part of my community or just the communities that I'm aware of?"

He closed by saying, "You all are having those honest conversations, but make sure you have those kinds of conversations with everybody."

EPIC ECONOMIC PROGRESS, ST. PETE SHINES

Gypsy Gallardo, Executive Director, One Community Plan

Jocelyn Howard, VP - Foundation & Grow Smarter Manager, St. Petersburg Chamber

During a session entitled Epic Economic Progress: St. Pete Shines, participants heard about a couple of local efforts to address equity in the city by growing the paychecks, bank accounts, and balance sheets of African Americans in St. Petersburg. Speakers included Gypsy Gallardo, Executive Director of the One Community Plan (<https://onecommunitystpete.com>) – a ten-year equity initiative, and Jocelyn Howard, who is with the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and manages the Grow Smarter Program, an economic development strategy that began in 2013 and has included collective impact around fair and equitable growth in the city.

Gallardo said that about a decade ago, St. Petersburg ranked near “rock bottom” in many measures of economic strength for African Americans, including the lowest black male graduation rate in Florida and among 50 largest school districts in the U.S., one of highest black male incarceration rates in Florida, one of the state’s highest rates of black fatherlessness, and the weakest black-owned business sector among Florida’s ten largest cities. These low economic numbers began to motivate people to action with leaders in government, education, and the nonprofit sector fielding new strategies.

In 2016, leaders involved in the 2020 Plan – a collective impact initiative to reduce the city’s Black poverty rate by 30% by the year 2020, asked the city to invest in the creation of a comprehensive economic growth plan for South St. Petersburg, where nearly 80% of the city’s black population resides. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor championed the vision as a strategic action toward equitable economic growth. City Council members voted unanimously to approve a \$100,000 investment in the planning process to create of a 10-year economic growth plan – One Community Plan – for South St. Petersburg.

Gallardo said the Initial focus was on expanding opportunity pathway programs in several fields (entrepreneurship, employment and youth enrichment), as well as innovations in economic equity policies. More than 100 new opportunity pathway programs and resource channels were created:

- Career Skills Training & Degree Programs
- Poverty-Exit Programs
- Business Growth & Capital Access Programs
- Youth Enrichment & Employment Programs
- Family Development/Co-Parenting Programs

By working together, they began to see positive results for the Black community. A six-year advocacy effort inspired the creation of the South St. Petersburg Community Redevelopment Area (CRA), which is to generate \$100 million in tax increment revenue to community businesses, organizations and residents over 30 years. They also achieved record-setting youth employment and business formation levels, while the Black male graduation rate tripled. By 2019, St. Petersburg had its lowest Black poverty rate in its history and one of the lowest rates in Florida, and a full 55% of the city’s Black



Photo by Bill Straus Photography

population had “some college,” up from just 36% in the year 2000.

Gallardo said the keys to their success in the Employment Pathways were focusing on the “working poor and the willing.” She stressed that upskilling was huge for poverty reduction and income growth. They also focused on the areas of greatest potential impact – Black-led single parent households, which were the largest concentration of people in poverty in St. Pete. In the Entrepreneurial Pathway area, they concentrated on microentrepreneurs, both existing and emerging, as well as six- to seven-figure businesses that were new to supplier diversity. Ultimately, the biggest point of emphasis to move people out of poverty is income growth, putting real money in real people’s pockets, added Gallardo.

Gallardo said, “Listen to your Black people. A key for us was that African Americans began to be positioned in the places where they could make a difference and where they could set policy.” St. Pete Mayor Ken Welch is the first mayor in the city’s history to stake a day one commitment to equitable economic development. “St. Petersburg is now ready for transformative change in the economic equity space,” she added.

The Grow Smarter program (<https://growsmarterstpete.com>) began in 2014 as a partnership between the St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce and the City of St. Petersburg to enhance the city’s ability to support diverse economic growth. It is an economic development strategy with a focus on equity that operates as a cross-sector initiative with the mission to reduce gaps by race and place by creating equitable economic growth. Its mission is to build an inclusive, multi-sector initiative to create equitable economic growth in St. Petersburg.

The Grow Smarter Strategy identified five target industry sectors primed for growth and development in St. Petersburg: Marine & Life Science, Data Analytics, Specialized Manufacturing, Creative Arts & Design, and Financial Services. The strategy also led to the creation of the Economic Development Corporation and formalization of the St. Petersburg Innovation District. In 2018, a grant from the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg allowed Grow Smarter to hire staff and bring an equity lens to these economic development efforts.

PLACEMAKING & PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Whit Blanton, Forward Pinellas
Derek Kilborn, City of St. Petersburg
Joshua Johnson, City of St. Petersburg
Moderated by Ray Daniels, Board Chair of Lexington For Everyone

During a session entitled “Placemaking & Planning for the Future,” St. Petersburg and Pinellas County leaders discussed strategies related to providing housing opportunities, jobs land for growth and equity solutions to improve affordability and access to key infrastructure. The common theme among the panelists was the willingness of the city and county to provide some flexibility on projects to maximize the land use opportunities and meet the needs of the area.

Whit Blanton is the executive director of Forward Pinellas, a land use and transportation planning agency that guides integrated transportation and land use solutions that sustain economic value by connecting the communities of Pinellas County and the Tampa Bay region. The agency is charged with addressing countywide land use and transportation concerns, as both the Pinellas Planning Council and Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization.

He said, “We are responsible for directing state and federal transportation dollars into Pinellas County.” It is a unique area in that it includes Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Pasco County, and there are three separate MPO’s in that one urbanized area. “So, our regional coordination efforts are extremely complex,” he added. “We don’t try to dictate what the city of St. Petersburg or any other city or county does, but we try to enable them to try to accomplish what they want to accomplish.” Blanton also said that allows them to link transportation and land use investment decisions together. “We have to embrace density, so where we invest in density, we invest in transit, public transportation; we want to make places more walkable and pedestrian friendly.”

Derek Kilborn manages the City of St. Petersburg’s Urban Planning and Historic Preservation Division within the Planning and Development Services Department. His division is responsible for any visioning efforts and incorporating them into the city’s Comprehensive Plan, as well as any land development regulations. He said, “Our zoning categories are in a framework of residential neighborhoods, mixed-use corridors, and mixed-use nodes where those corridors intersect. The city is set up that way is that we can emphasize that co-dependence and importance between land use policies and transportation policies.”

Joshua Johnson is the Housing and Community Development Director for the City of St. Petersburg, responsible for planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting of the department’s activities. The City of St. Petersburg Housing and Community Development Department is charged with developing a Consolidated Plan once every five years. The city receives federal funding to manage housing and community development initiatives, with the goal of revitalizing the city’s low to moderate-income communities and integrating economic, community development, physical and environmental development needs. Local private and for-profit organizations located within the corporate limits of St. Petersburg can apply for funding to serve residents in areas of social services, housing, community and economic development. **[Read more at www.stpete.org/residents/housing/developers/consolidated_plan.php]**



Photo by Bill Straus Photography

Mr. Johnson said, “We have an issue in this area with affordable housing here, because we have been seriously inundated with a large influx of people who have moved from the north, the Midwest, the southwest and the West Coast, all wanting to come to Florida. The people who we usually serve, they have nowhere to go to find housing. About five years ago, the median sales price of a home in Pinellas County was around \$220,000. Today, as of March 31, that same median home sales price has increased to \$435,000.” He added that it has become very challenging to assist those in need, but they are doing the best they can to ensure that everyone has a place to live.

Mr. Kilborn mentioned that in 2018 the city started a public information series to demonstrate to the community that the types of incremental housing city officials would be talking about already existed throughout the city and that “this was part of the historic character that everyone has come to cherish.” He said that when they would talk generically about increasing density along the edge of a neighborhood, they would receive a strong reaction to the conversation. He added, “So, we wanted to lead with photographs first, and fortunately we have great housing stock that represents all of these different typologies that communities are considering today.”

He said once his staff put images of these types of developments on the screen, they received favorable reactions to the buildings, and then they would start to breakdown what was actually inside, including the number of units and the density. “In terms of density, our residential neighborhoods on paper, we’re regularly at 7.5 to 15 units per acre, but the photographs of the buildings in the historic neighborhoods were calculating anywhere between 35 and 55 units per acre. That was a very important exercise for us, because in order to achieve the type of incremental development that we’re talking about, those numbers have to increase on paper, but the physical representation of what they mean to the neighborhood – the character – is really something that we don’t want them to fear.”

After a few years of the public information series, the city’s Urban Planning and Historic Preservation Division narrowed its work into three key areas related to land use/zoning.

1. Expansion of accessory dwelling units (ADU’s) – mother-in-law suites or garage apartments. They are currently allowed in approximately half the city according to zoning codes, and they wanted to discuss expanding that into the remaining balance of the city and what design guidelines should be attached to those. They also talked about modifying the existing design regulations for ADU’s related to minimum parking requirements. **CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE →**

PLACEMAKING & PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

2. Focusing on reintroducing “Missing Middle” building typologies along primary corridors. Mr. Kilborn said, “There has been some substantive conversation with the stakeholders in our community and the city council about whether that approach is too conservative, and should there be a more aggressive approach allowing these building typologies throughout the neighborhoods, or should we not be having this conversation at all.”

3. Discussions about increasing density along mixed-use corridors. Along the mixed-use corridors, the city has issue zoning, so it allows both vertical and horizontal mixed-use commercial and residential. Along some of those primary corridors, the density allows only 15 units per acre. They are looking at increasing that number along those corridors, starting the conversation at 30 units per acre.

Another key area related to density is workforce housing units. St. Petersburg has what’s called the Workforce Housing Bonus, which can be an additional 8 to 10 units per acre in those corridor categories. The housing code used to require a public hearing approval for projects that included workforce housing units. That requirement was removed for projects with workforce housing. Kilborn said, “There are not that many units, and they should be reviewed on the same plane as all the other multi-family projects.”

To increase the workforce housing bonus numbers in the downtown center, Kilborn said a bonus system was implemented that requires either inclusion of workforce housing units in the project itself or a payment ‘in lieu of’ paid to the Housing and Community Development Department’s program that finds workforce housing or affordable housing units elsewhere. The Workforce Housing Density Bonus Program creates incentives for developers and property owners to provide workforce housing as a part of new development within the city.

Mr. Johnson noted that for the past ten years, the Workforce Housing Density Bonus Program had only collected about \$40,000. However, a recent change to the program that increased the amount collected from developers resulted in about \$240,000 of revenue over the last month.

Mr. Blanton said that counties are much more powerful than cities in Florida, and counties can pass an additional sales tax for infrastructure. In 1990, Pinellas County passed the Penny For Pinellas, a one-cent sales tax for capital improvements around the county. In 2017, the Penny For Pinellas was approved again by a whopping 83-percent of voters countywide. Projects agreed on through a 2017 interlocal agreement will fund jail and court facilities, as well as economic development capital projects and affordable housing. **[Read more at www.pinellascounty.org/penny]**

In the 2017 referendum, the county commission also mandated that about 10-percent be committed to workforce housing and economic development. **[Read more at <https://advantagepinellas.org/homes-for-pinellas/penny-for-pinellas-housing-program>]** Blanton said that there are some limitations with it, “It can’t make buildings go vertical, but what it can do is clear the sites and ready the land for redevelopment. Developers can apply for that Penny For Pinellas money for affordable housing. The intent is to leverage that redevelopment potential while lowering the cost of redevelopment to the applicants.”

As the county has become increasingly built out, the supply of industrial designated land needed by business has dwindled. In 2007, the Target Employment and Industrial Land Study for the Pinellas Community (TEILS) was conducted.

[www.pinellasbydesign.org/teils.htm] The study showed that there must be a balance between building industrial sites and planning for commercial/mixed-use options. Blanton said, “Our policy has been very rigid about preserving all industrial and manufacturing lands, but we know that not all of it is equal, and a mixed-use development on industrial-zoned land might make sense.” The state legislature just recently enabled that for affordable housing and just this past year passed another law that made mixed-use development possible on industrial land, as long as 10-percent is deemed to be affordable.

To help essential workers live in the communities in which they serve, the Florida state legislature recently passed the Hometown Heroes Act, which provides affordable housing options for firefighters, teachers, police officers, etc. The Act has been signed into law by the governor and is effective as of July 1, 2022. It will provide a significant amount of money to cities and counties to offer a subsidy for that type of housing.

Mr. Johnson reported that the city is looking at starting a program that would provide rental assistance for city employees, because of rising rent costs. The average monthly rent in St. Petersburg is about \$1,600, and sometimes more depending on the neighborhood. Downtown rents are about \$2,800 per month. They already have down payment assistance for police and firefighters as well as home rehab assistance for seniors who want to remain in their home, but who live on a fixed income.

To help mitigate gentrification in some areas, the Pinellas County Commission approved the Southside Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) in 2015, which is one of three CRA’s in the city aimed at promoting reinvestment in housing and neighborhoods, commercial corridors, business development, education and workforce development, and non-profit capacity building. Using tax increment financing as the funding mechanism, the Southside CRA is the largest in St. Petersburg and one of the largest in the state. According to Johnson, the CRA generates about \$2.5 million per year to fix homes in the area and provide incentives to developers who purchase lots in the area. This is one way St. Petersburg is attempting to head off the many cash offers on homes in the area. **[Read more at www.stpete.org/business/economic_development/community_re_development_areas.php]**

When asked if everyone in St. Petersburg and Pinellas County have a voice and a seat at the table, Mr. Blanton said, “No, and I think that’s very unfortunate. Our agency just completed an equity assessment where we looked at our internal operations, our administration, our committee structure, and our work products. While we’re doing some things well, we are significantly lacking in other areas. Our board adopted an equity action plan two months ago, and we are now working to implement that.” He added that their meetings were not very accessible to all people, especially with the poor public transit system, and they have decided to go where the people are and have meetings in the neighborhoods. Mr. Kilborn also said ‘no’ to that question. During the city’s recent visioning plan called St. Pete 2050 **[www.stpete2050.com/index.html]**, he said that they implemented some non-traditional methods of outreach, such as developing a survey and hiring residents so they could be trained to take that survey to their local organizations to get feedback from people who don’t normally participate in the process. They also partnered with the school district to get feedback from teenagers, and the virtual options offered during the pandemic were also valuable.

THE TAMPA BAY PARTNERSHIP

Dave Sobush, The Tampa Bay Partnership Facilitated by John Bevington, LG&E & KU

The Tampa Bay Partnership is a coalition of regional business leaders, joined by a shared commitment to improving the personal and economic well-being of Tampa Bay residents. Formally incorporated in 1994 and re-established in 2016 with a new mission and leadership structure, the organization brings together more than 40 of the region's top employers, along with a diverse group of public and philanthropic partners, to tackle the toughest challenges facing the community, including transportation, talent and other emerging issues.

According to Dave Sobush, the organization got its start in 1992 when several chambers of commerce joined together on business development and marketing. At the time, there were several county-based organizations handling business development and lead generation. Sobush wasn't sure if this story was true or not, but there was an accountant with a local utility company who received invoices from two invoices from different economic development agencies for the same trade show. He said, "Why are we sending two different groups to the same trade show to sell against each other?" Thus, it was decided that the Partnership would handle those functions and when a company became interested in a piece of property or building, they would be handed over to one of the economic development agencies.

In the late 1990's, one of the biggest challenges was drinking water, including who had access to it, how much was being used, the fact that growth was putting a strain on that resource. Sobush said the city was very close to putting out a building moratorium to deal with the issue, which would have really hampered business recruitment efforts. "That would get your name crossed off the list for relocation," said Sobush. "Site selection is a process of elimination, and you just fight to stay on that list as long as possible."

In 1998, the Partnership played an integral part in working with Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco counties to create Tampa Bay Water. Establishing this regional water authority successfully addressed the controversial "water wars" that threatened the growth of Tampa Bay. This was the first time the Partnership ventured into advocacy, and it began a new, and necessary, role for the organization as a unified voice on the critical issues impacting a diverse, and often divided, community.

In 2006, the Partnership worked with state legislators to drive the formation of the Bay Area Legislative Delegation (BALD), creating a political body focused on advancing regional legislative priorities. This delegation would serve as launch pad for legislative leadership and greatly influence regional development in the years to come.

Then, during the recession years of 2007-09, Sobush said they began to see a rift in the members of the partnership between the local governments and economic development organizations – who wanted the Partnership to focus on business development and marketing – and the business leaders, who felt there should be more than just selling the region and the organization should ensure the region remains competitive and growing in a responsible way.

By 2014, the leaders of the Partnership initiated a significant pivot in its mission, deciding to exclusively focus on regional research and public policy to create a more powerful and effective vehicle for directly impacting the economic growth of Tampa Bay. In 2016, the Partnership's board of directors dissolved its governance structure and unanimously adopted a new set of articles, bylaws and guiding principles that fundamentally transformed the future course of the organization. Sobush

said they wanted to make sure they focused on the "big, long-term issues facing the region."

Sobush some key changes with the organizational pivot. He said that they limited membership on the Partnership's Council of Governors to CEO's or presidents, because they wanted people who had the authority to make decisions. The organizational also let all of its public funds expire and became a hundred percent privately funded. He added,

"When you excuse that public money, you give the organization a lot more clout and a lot more ability to do the hard work of advocacy." Although the organization excused the public money, the Partnership's leaders remained close with the elected officials in the area, but also aligned with philanthropic organizations as well to get their perspective.

In 2017, the Tampa Bay Partnership launched the State of the Region initiative, which includes an annual State of the Region Community Event and a collection of complementary research projects that provide reliable, objective data to help community leaders understand Tampa Bay's strengths and weaknesses, how the area compares to communities across the country, and the actions needed to move the needle on their greatest challenges. The organization annually produces a Regional Competitiveness Report, which includes 60 indicators of prosperity and measures performance against 19 communities nationwide. The indicators have been categorized into five buckets, including Economic Vitality, Innovation, Infrastructure, Talent, and Civic Quality. The report can be viewed on-line at www.stateoftheregion.com/rcr.html.

According to the data, a couple of areas where Tampa Bay has really struggled are the growth rate of gross regional product (GRP), which measures the year-to-year change, in real terms, in the value of all goods and services produced in a region, and labor force participation, which has been low for a while. It was assumed that the reason for the low labor force participation was because of the number of retirees in the area, but in fact, those that are 25 to 34 years old are less likely to be in the workforce.

Another area of concern for Tampa Bay is talent development. When the competitiveness report first came out, the region ranked near the bottom of almost all talent categories when compared to its 19 other benchmark cities. To address the issue, a new 501c3 organization called Tampa Bay Works (www.tampabayworks.org) spun out of the Tampa Bay Partnership. Tampa Bay Works collaborates with employers to define their collective needs, communicate with a unified voice, and drive action from talent providers across the region. It also leverages data-driven methodologies such as Hire-for-Potential, Talent Pipeline Management®, Skills-Based Hiring and Predictive Index.

By 2022, the latest report showed that "Tampa Bay saw high school graduation rates – for all students, as well as the economically disadvantaged – improve versus the prior year, along with an improvement in ranking." However, several of the area's other rankings in the talent area took a hit during the COVID pandemic, including rates of certificates and degrees, K-12 state assessments, and kindergarten readiness.



Photo by Bill Straus Photography

MAKE IT TAMPA BAY INITIATIVE

Janette Carter, Visit Tampa Bay Michelle Bauer, Tampa Bay Economic Development Council

During day three of the Tampa-St. Petersburg Leadership Visit, participants heard about a talent initiative called Make It Tampa Bay, a partnership between the Tampa Bay Economic Development Council, Visit Tampa Bay, and Hillsborough County's Tourist Development Council that is designed to attract professional talent to Hillsborough County and create a driver for business relocation. Speakers included Michelle Bauer, Chief Operating Officer for the Tampa Bay Economic Development Council, and Janette Carter, Vice President of Marketing and Communications for Visit Tampa Bay.

The idea for the initiative came in 2016 thanks to "a chairperson who was very deeply committed to advancing younger business owners and entrepreneurs and making sure that they had a seat at the table." So, they brought together a group of millennials and entrepreneurs to talk about how they could craft a message that would attract more people like them to the market.

They started by developing a website but didn't have a budget to commit to the effort. That's when Ron Barton, Assistant Hillsborough County Administrator, suggested they look at using some tourist development money to do a joint campaign. So, they began to develop ads, video and social media posts to use in other cities to promote the Tampa area as a great place not only to visit on vacation, but to also live and work. View this video [https://youtu.be/_4u5ykoSMZo] that describes the initiative in more detail.

In early 2018, downtown office workers and residents in New York City, Philadelphia, Dallas and Chicago began seeing ads for Make it Tampa Bay, as the campaign showcased job opportunities, employers, local neighborhoods and entrepreneurial success stories all designed to lure college-educated millennials to Tampa and Hillsborough County. The campaign also leveraged LinkedIn and other social media promotions, outdoor advertising, radio spots and more.

The target audience was focused on educated, professional millennials (25-35 years old) looking for a new city that's affordable and offers a great quality of life; where they can find great career opportunities, buy a home, and feel like they're on vacation all the time. They could be actively looking for a city that is fully 'open for business' and could be an entrepreneur working remotely and looking for a better lifestyle. A couple of the key career sectors that the EDC is targeting to recruit include tech and cybersecurity, as well as healthcare.

When the pandemic began in 2020, the campaign was put on hiatus without any funding, but they were able to keep some aspects going by continuing to use organic posts on social media highlighting the top jobs of the day in the area. In late 2021, the county committed \$1.5 million to the campaign for the next two years. Since COVID, Bauer said that they've seen a lot of on-line traffic from the northeast and a steady increase of people relocating to the market. In fact, the Tampa area was #3 on the list of top U.S.



Photo by Bill Straus Photography

cities that people are looking to move to, according to real estate firm Redfin. "More than 9,000 additional people moved into the area than out during the first two months of 2022, Redfin found, compared to about 6,000 during the same period a year ago."

[<https://www.tampabay.com/news/business/2022/03/24/tampa-is-no-3-on-list-of-us-cities-where-people-want-to-move>]

Bauer said, "There's been a huge influx of new people, new money, new talent. We're trying to get our arms around all of this." She noted that the campaign more recently has been focused on the following markets: New York, Chicago, Miami, Orlando and Boston, targeting people between the ages of 35 and 44 and evenly split between men and women. Chicago, New York and Boston are important markets for Tampa because they are major centers for healthcare and cybersecurity, which are two key targeted industries where Tampa wants to increase the number of professionals. Bauer also mentioned that the Tampa region has a ton of graduates each year, but they don't have a lot of experience, so that's why they targeted people between age 35-44, because the region has a great need to fill jobs in the middle tier of management.

Bauer also noted that most of the traffic to the Make It Tampa Bay website regularly comes to the job listings pages. "Jobs are what it's all about," she added. "The job board gets the most hits and a ton of activity." Since March 1st, the website has had 600 job searches, and only 23% have come from people in Tampa, "so our targeting is working." "We are very intentional about our job board. We don't use Indeed or any of the other large brand name job boards." She said they pull specifically from companies that are in those targeted industries and only those located in Hillsborough County.

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