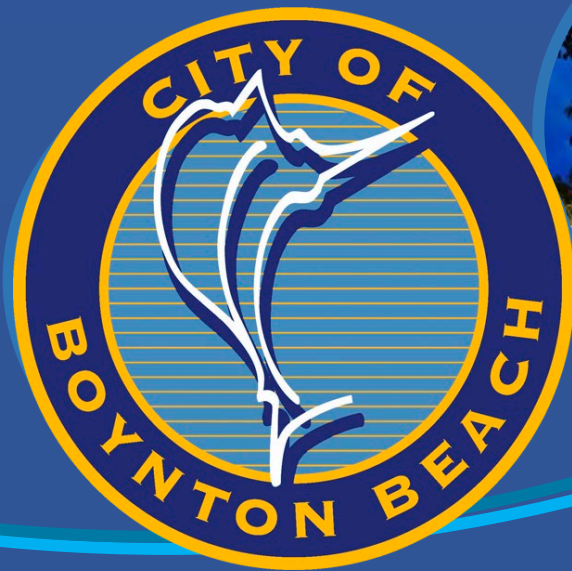


2021



City of Boynton Beach

Community Needs Assessment



Prepared by

FIU | Jorge M. Pérez
Metropolitan Center
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY



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Executive Summary

The 2021 Boynton Beach Community Needs Assessment (CNA) is part of the City's comprehensive approach to address racial and social equity in the city through an internal assessment, a community assessment, and authentic and impactful engagement. Combined, these three elements - evidence-based community analysis, review and changes in internal city policies and practices, and authentic community engagement that leads to the long-term integration of community feedback into the policy-making realm - present a model that *has not* been implemented anywhere else in South Florida. It also speaks to the genuine long-term commitment of the City to meet the current challenges head on, by understanding community dynamics and ensuring an intentional and impactful response from the city and its partners.

The CNA aims to highlight the most pressing issues for city residents through an equity lens. More importantly, the research and data presented in this report illustrate the intersections of various community challenges and provide insight into how complex issues can and should be addressed collaboratively. The findings point to significant equity issues that are not unique to Boynton Beach, but are rather pervasive across communities in the United States. What makes the City different from many other localities is its willingness to examine them critically and then commit to working with partners and diverse groups across the city to channel resources towards solutions, through capacity building, funding allocation and leadership.

The findings outlined below highlight the most significant disparities and point to potential strategies for addressing them. Findings are organized by equity pillar but it is important once again to emphasize that as the challenges intersect, so the solutions.


Economic Opportunity

Disparities in Income and Poverty Rates: Black or African American residents historically and currently have significantly lower household and per-capita incomes than their White and Hispanic neighbors. Black residents also experience poverty at higher rates than the rest of the city.

Recommended Strategies: Targeted efforts to increase awareness of job and training options; direct resources and encourage providers to connect with economically disadvantaged individuals and consider providing additional services that improve access to training, e.g. transportation, life coaching and other wraparound services.

Dominance of Sectors with Low Upward Mobility and Income Prospects: Retail Trade ranks first in number of establishments and second in number of employees. This is a sector with a high concentration of minorities and younger workers; these jobs also tend to be lower-wage positions with little-to-no security or stability.

Recommended Strategies: Encourage retailers to provide higher incomes, but also benefits and policies that provide stability to workers; conduct a business survey to understand challenges of employers in finding workforce and their needs for business support services; develop a targeted approach to attract and support businesses in high wage sectors; incubate and accelerate existing businesses with high-growth potential and high value-added in terms of revenues and worker earnings; Buy Local campaign; provide exposure to local businesses by creating a local directory



Low Diversity of Jobs and Occupations: There is little awareness/attention on jobs that only require short-term training or certification. Many of these sectors, like Construction, provide opportunities for higher earnings and are in-demand.

Recommended Strategies: Promotion of existing educational programs, encourage education providers to offer short-term certifications for in-demand jobs within the city (to avoid transportation challenges); monitor economic changes to pivot educational opportunities into sectors in-need of a larger “pipeline” and specific skills

Office Space in High Demand: Rented office space is currently at a 14-year low vacancy rate while rent cost per square foot has steadily increased over the past decade. Even with 80,000 square feet of new office space completing soon, vacancies are projected to remain low. The changes in the retail sector precipitated by online trade create uncertainty about some commercial space uses.

Recommended Strategies: Promotion of Boynton Beach as a professional work-destination; Leveraging current market to attract desired/targeted companies and sector; explore demand and opportunities for co-working space.

Shifting Shopping Habits: Online shopping has flourished during the pandemic and projections show that traditional Brick-and-Mortar shops are unlikely to reach their previous popularity. Stand-alone shop vacancies are increasing but Strip-malls (clustered stores sharing parking lots) are becoming more popular.

Recommended Strategies: Encourage zoning transitions to more clustered shops; promote hybrid business models that incorporate the online component of shopping; support businesses with digital connectivity, e.g. website creation, online sales and other business supports – work with existing providers to offer services in Boynton Beach.


Education

Disparities in Graduation Rates and Standardized Assessments: Leading up to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, graduation rates in the city had been steadily rising. Newer data is revealing that graduation rates are starting to decline. This is likely connected to the steep drops in FSA Math/ELL scores; Math scores in particular are showing concerning decline since 2019.

Recommended Strategies: Make primary and secondary school experiences more equitable by focusing resources in areas that will uplift underserved communities - provide prep courses/programs and practice testing; after-school programming; revive the youth center closed during the recession.

Disparities in Educational Attainment Inhibit Economic Opportunities: Boynton Beach has a large, college educated population with the majority of Bachelor’s Degrees in the Science/Engineering or Business sectors. While similar proportions of Hispanic, Black, and White residents attended at least some college, Black or African American residents are less likely to obtain Bachelor’s or Graduate degrees. GEDs and alternative credentialing is generally underutilized.

Recommended Strategies: Create an effective education-to-workforce pipeline by analyzing job demand and worker supply trends, and raising awareness about future job prospects and training opportunities; disseminate information to high school students about skills in demand and job projections.



Improve School Choice and Access to Programs: Families with the means to do so, are sending their children to charter or private schools. This is resulting in a concentration of minorities and economically disadvantaged students within the city's public schools. While Boynton Beach is predominantly white and relatively affluent, most students attending public school within city boundaries are minorities or economically disadvantaged, or both.

Recommended Strategies: Improve support to at-risk students - ensure that students receive information and opportunities to learn both in school and outside of school on career topics, including prospective fields of work; create partnerships between city, school and the private sector for mentorship, internships or apprenticeships; invite certification providers to offer accessible and affordable courses to students, creating foundational skills, including technology, but also soft skills, college readiness, financial literacy; afterschool programs; economic instability and parental involvement have significant impact on educational outcomes, therefore provide wraparound services to families.

Housing

Disparities in Ownership and Cost-burden: White, Non-Hispanic residents of Boynton Beach have much higher home-ownership rates than minority residents. Black or African American residents, in particular, have the lowest homeownership rates. Renters are much more likely to spend unsustainable amounts of their income on housing costs; most Boynton Beach renters are cost-burdened, i.e. spending 30 percent or more of income on housing costs.

Turbulent Market for Buying and Renting: In 2021, nearly 40% of sold Homes were sold above the listing price and the median number of days on-market for homes has halved. Apartment rental prices have increased significantly despite Boynton having one of the fastest growing supply pipelines in the county. Less than 10% of Boynton Renters could feasibly transition to Homeownership in the current market given income and market trends.

Recommended Strategies: First homebuyer programs, provide incentives for affordable housing development through land use changes, mixed-income development; focus on economic development broadly as a way to improve income levels and job creation, e.g. small business development; focus resources, information, job opportunities and workforce development to lower income renter households; financial literacy and education; direct aid to renters

Aging of Housing Stock: Approximately two-thirds of housing in Boynton Beach was built prior to 1990. The age of available homes has implications for the city as older housing that has not been consistently maintained is less likely to attract new families or maintain current families where they are. Median Home values in Boynton fluctuate between decades, but some of the lowest values are seen in homes built from the 60's to the late 70's. Most people who own these homes are senior citizens.

Recommended Strategies: Resources for renovations and maintenance of older homes; buyout of older homes and preserving them as affordable housing, working with developers to renovate and keep affordable or put in a trust; land banking, i.e. purchase of land by City of Boynton Beach and CRA to be used for development of affordable housing



Criminal Justice and Safety

Crime Rate Decrease but Variation Across Neighborhoods: There was a significant decrease of crime rates from 2010 to 2020; however, crime rates in Boynton Beach are higher than the county and vary across neighborhoods, with higher rates in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Recommended Strategies: Adopt a public health model by addressing determinants of criminal behavior, e.g. efforts that create decent-paying jobs, enhancing vocational and educational opportunities, improving neighborhood living conditions and housing stability should all help reduce poverty and its attendant problems and thus to reduce crime; support programs that reduce recidivism and encourage reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals.

Juvenile Crime Decrease but High Rate in Economically Disadvantaged Neighborhoods: A decrease in juvenile crimes but a higher rate of juvenile crime among economically disadvantaged populations and neighborhoods; an increase in the youth who are issued a civil citation (diversion alternative), but a higher proportion of minority youth offenders are arrested rather than issued an alternative civil citation.

Recommended Strategies: Addressing behavioral needs of youth at first contact with the juvenile justice system and helping them overcome that behavior enhances public safety; Evidence shows that after-school programs reduce crime; Wraparound family support, mental health and substance abuse services outside of school and after school hours; Mentorship and life coaching, providing positive role models for youth in single-parent families

Policing: Drivers of crime are complex and members of communities with high crime rates may feel trapped between violence and law enforcement. Determine the right quantity of policing by involving the community and building trust.

Recommended Strategies: Community policing, which denotes the building of relationships between police and the community through consistent presence of recognizable officers and their interaction with the community; Programs that introduce police to school-age children and reduce fear and distrust; review officer body camera footage, analyze trends of use of force and provide training for law enforcement officials



Health

Lower rate of health insurance coverage for working age residents and for African American and Hispanic groups: The younger population, under 18 years, and the older population, over 65, have the highest rates of health insurance coverage. Black residents are the least likely to have health insurance coverage. Lower health insurance rates among minority groups are linked to their concentration in food service, hospitality and retail sectors that often do not offer health benefits, as well as their employment in small businesses that are not required to offer healthcare benefits.

Recommended Strategies: Advocacy with employers to offer health benefits; workforce upskilling to match skills demand for higher wage positions with health benefits; increase awareness of health insurance marketplace.

Adverse health outcomes disproportionately impact Black residents: Some of the illnesses can be controlled by lifestyle choices and regular check-ups. But the populations that could greatly benefit from behavior change also has the least access to healthy choices and resources.

Recommended Strategies: Increasing access to wrap-around services and food security in under-resourced neighborhoods; Increasing awareness of racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare; Targeted education and health awareness campaigns

There is a significant need for mental health services: The rate of behavioral/mental health professionals in Palm Beach County increased by 12 percent from 2016 to 2019; however, services may be inaccessible to lower income and uninsured residents. In addition to physical health outcomes, mental health outcomes are important factors that determine quality of life. Stressors such as job loss/unemployment, financial instability, and traumatic life events have a direct impact on overall health.

Recommended Strategies: Raise awareness about the importance of mental health, and reduce stigma about seeking help, especially among minorities and male residents; create partnerships among local organizations to provide continuum of service delivery

Healthy Lifestyle Choices and Eating Habits Begin at a Young Age: Evidence shows that early learning is a crucial stage that influences behavior in later life stages, and has long-term impacts on lifestyle choices and health outcomes.

Recommended Strategies: Early intervention through culturally sensitive approach to health and wellness; school and at-home education; urban and community gardens; support for local and regional organizations that provide affordable healthy foods to vulnerable residents



Introduction

The purpose of the Boynton Beach Community Needs Assessment (CNA) is to develop a framework to address racial and social equity in the delivery of city services for the benefit of all communities within the city. This unique equity initiative came about as a local response to a national crisis. On May 25, 2020, 46-year-old George Floyd, a Black truck driver and security guard, was murdered by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin. This event helped catalyze and invigorate an ongoing movement to address racial, ethnic inequities and disparities that have existed across all spaces of American life.

In July 2020, the Boynton Beach City Commission approved the creation of a Task Force to address racial and social equity in the City. Through a partnership with Florida International University, the City developed a comprehensive approach that seeks to identify and develop recommendations for inequities within the City's marginalized communities through a Community Assessment, and to position the City's organizational culture to institutionalize and implement equitable policies and programs through an internal assessment, The Diversity and Equity Assessment of City Systems. The internal city assessment entailed an examination of internal city practices to ensure that the City has the structures and capacity to effectively implement policies towards racial and social justice.

The Diversity and Equity Assessment was presented to the City Commission on November 16, 2021, and the elected official unanimously approved its recommendations. The 31 recommendations included the hire a Director of Equity and Inclusion (E&I), the training of city leadership and staff on diversity, equity and inclusion, and the continued monitoring and analysis of the outcomes of various city policies and procedures through an equity lens. This seminal report creates the foundation for the city to become a leader in the implementation of equity within city structures and policies.

In conjunction with the internal assessment, the City's CNA provides comprehensive analysis establishing evidence-based understanding of community characteristics and trajectory across the five equity pillars – education, housing, economic opportunity, health and wellness and safety – and examines their intersecting relationships in order to develop holistic, integrated approaches to community development. The CNA indicators can be used to develop a social equity index that reflects current conditions and allows for monitoring of changes and progress in the future. The data used in the development of this report is the most current information from publicly available and proprietary sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau, Florida Department of Education, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, and many others. Additional information and feedback was provided in two focus groups with Boynton Beach residents, a public meeting held in November 2021, and fifteen roundtable discussions with community stakeholders held between August and November 2021.

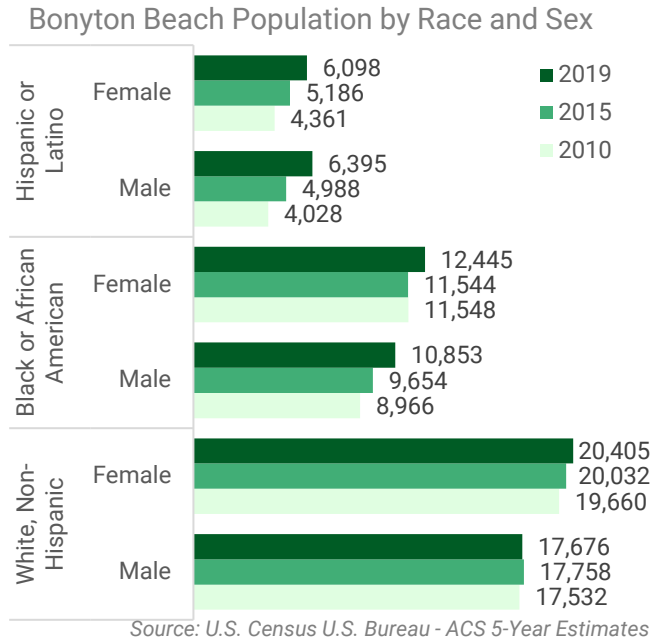


A crucial element for the development of community-based solutions is the authentic engagement strategy deployed in the CNA development. Stakeholder committees of individuals from identified social groups, city representatives, and community members were established for each focus area, and the groups met monthly from August through October 2021. The participants provided feedback on the data included in the CNA, and discussed strategies and solutions. The intent behind this continuous stakeholder engagement is for it to lead to the long-term integration of community feedback into the policy-making realm, a model that *has not* been implemented anywhere else in South Florida. Typically stakeholders are approached to provide intermittent feedback on specific items, research, policies or other efforts, rather than continuously and in a manner that integrates different perspectives, from education, to workforce development to business support services. The intent is for the stakeholder engaged in this process to serve as a strong learning community that fosters interactions and relationships based on mutual respect and trust. The roundtable meetings established a social structure for individuals to share ideas, stories, documents, etc. that support community activities and help individuals make sense of new knowledge. This engagement strategy is about outreach and dissemination of information, but also includes the community for consultation, collaboration and shared leadership. As this engagement continues, it will lead to the development of community leaders as the champions of transformation.

COVID-19 is a likely *Great Accelerator* of longstanding socio-economic trends. Now, more than ever, local officials and organizations need to act as economic and community development officers, and to that end, they need the tools and appropriate mechanisms to implement solutions. The CNA provides the baseline knowledge upon which subsequent community building and development can occur. This comprehensive, holistic analysis connects the different indicators and speaks to the barriers and opportunities for community development.

Demographics and Background Information

The city of Boynton Beach has been in a period of transformation over the past decade. Since 2010, the city’s population has grown by about 17.8 percent, to 80,380 residents. While the city’s population is predominantly White Non-Hispanic (47 percent), Black or African American residents (31 percent) and Hispanic or Latino residents (15 percent) make up just under half of all residents. In terms of racial composition, 1,910 Boynton Beach residents identified as Asian, 251 as American Indian and Alaskan Native and 3,975 were of some other race. Much like many other communities across South Florida, Boynton Beach is becoming more diverse. The Hispanic community, in particular, has experienced substantial growth over that same time period – growing from 8,702 residents to 12,416 between 2010 and 2020.¹



Women remain a slight majority in Boynton, as has historically been the case. In 2019, about 40% of households in Boynton Beach were married-couple families and about a fifth of households had at least one child. The city has gotten slightly younger, with the median age dropping by about a year, and the number of children increasing from 13,150 in 2010 to 14,035 in 2020. However, the proportion of children living in Boynton Beach has steadily been dropping over the past decade, from 19.3 percent in 2010 down to 17.5 percent in 2020.² The proportion of residents 65 years of age and over (21%), is slightly lower than neighboring, comparable cities like Delray Beach and Boca Raton. This indicates a growing proportion of working-age adults.

Another important change is the decrease in the proportion of householders who own their homes, from about 68% in 2010 to 60% of all units in 2019. Inversely, renters in Boynton grew from about 32% to 40%.³ These changes are not unique to Boynton Beach but are of significant import as they speak to the market conditions and challenges of homeownership in South Florida.

The wave of population growth is important as it demonstrates the community’s attractiveness and competitive advantage, but growth needs to be harnessed for positive outcomes. Growth alone does not improve the lives of residents, but proper management and careful consideration has the potential to translate this growth into uplifting results. For example, despite the population increase, home ownership rate, the pool of housing units, and incomes, have not matched that pace of expansion.

The population growth of the city has been driven by an influx of new residents from other parts of the United States or other countries. In 2019, 1,911 households were estimated to had moved from

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. Decennial Census, 2010 and 2020. <https://www.data.census.gov>

² Ibid.

³ U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey. <https://www.data.census.gov>



abroad, 866 had moved from a different state, and 1,606 moved from a different county. Overall, in 2019, almost 14 percent were new Boynton Beach residents. In 2019, 29 percent of Boynton Beach households spoke a language other than English in the household, of which 3,442 were Spanish-speaking, and 5,902 spoke other languages. In 2019, almost 19,000 of the housing units (61 percent) were occupied by households who had been living in their residence only since 2010.⁴ Although more current data is not available yet, based on news coverage about influx of new residents to South Florida from the Northeast, Midwest and West, it is likely that Boynton Beach is continuing to attract new residents.

Across many of the pillars examined in this assessment, lines drawn across race, ethnicity, and sex demonstrate disparities with significant effects on resident prosperity and potential. Some of these factors are newer phenomena, like the need for digital connectivity services, but the foundation for much of this disparity has been laid in decades and centuries past; many of the issues discussed here are longstanding pervasive problems that the city, and in many cases, the nation overall, have been dealing with.

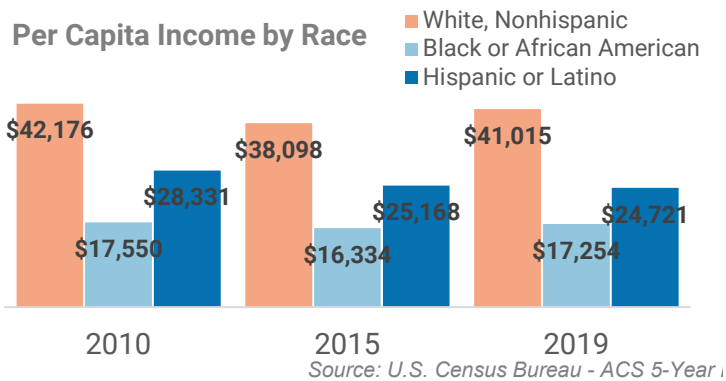
⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 2019 5-year estimates. <https://www.data.census.gov>

Economic Stability and Resilience

Perhaps the most centrally situated topic, is the economic progress and development of Boynton Beach. Similar to some of the other pillars, the economic development of the city is closely connected to many other topics. Often, successes in areas like education, health, and housing, directly correlate with economic indicators like income, debt, and occupation. Economic stability refers to the extent to which the community and work force is able to maintain its capacity in the face of hardships. For example, industry sectors that are able to withstand broader economic downturn provide the community and its employees with stability. Resiliency is closely connected to this, as it refers to the community's capacity to withstand negative shifts in stability – this was exemplified during the onset of the pandemic when businesses used lines of credit or government loans and grants to keep employees on payroll.

Income

Household incomes have been rising steadily in Palm Beach County since 2010, but the same is not necessarily true for residents of Boynton. The bulk of recent decline in incomes occurred in the wake of the 2008 recession – residents of all races, ethnicities, and sexes experienced earnings decreases, but they were proportionally more dramatic for the Hispanic and Black community. Beginning around 2015, median household incomes began to rapidly rise from \$51,000 to nearly \$58,000; by 2019, median household incomes had risen to finally be higher than they were in 2010. A similar trend is seen for per capita income during the same time period, with the incomes of individual Boynton Beach residents also coming significantly. By 2019, income levels had risen to just below where they were nearly a decade prior, once factored for inflation.⁵



Analysis of these trends helps exemplify some of the racial and ethnic disparities that were longstanding prior to the housing bubble that led to recession. For one, in 2010, Hispanic residents (\$28,000) and especially Black or African American (\$18,000) residents in Boynton were earning significantly lower incomes than their White, Non-Hispanic counterparts. Remarkably, while White, Non-Hispanic and Hispanic residents

were above the median household income level for Palm Beach County overall (\$53,000), the median household income of the Black and African community was slightly below at \$45,000 but continued to fall further behind in the following years. An interesting finding here was that despite Hispanic residents earning less annually per capita, on average their median household income was slightly above that of White, Non-Hispanic residents. This is likely a result of a combination of things, particularly more working age adults per home as well as a more homogenous distribution of income levels within the Hispanic community of Boynton Beach.

Another longstanding inequity is that between the incomes of men and women. From 2015-2019, before factoring for inflation, the median income level of men rose slightly while that of women fell slightly. That said, once inflation is accounted for, both groups have experienced overall decreases

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey. <https://www.data.census.gov>

in median income. More telling of the situation is the gap between the two groups - \$5,632 for full-time workers, or approximately 13 percent.⁶ This issue has likely been exacerbated during the COVID pandemic as women are so often looked to as primary caretakers for young children and older family members.

In 2019, full-time female workers earned 87 cents to a dollar earned by a full-time male worker.

The overview of both household and per capita income levels is necessary to effectively gauge how residents deal with shifts in economic conditions – after all, nearly 77 percent of all households in Boynton Beach are families. By 2019 many Boynton Beach residents had started to recover from the economic recession they experienced just a few years prior – poverty rates declined, residents were employed at higher rates, and home values were reaching the previous median levels. But even so, per capita, residents of Boynton across races and sexes were making less, on average, in 2019 than they were in 2010. At the household level, however, incomes were growing. This speaks to the complexity of assessing economic conditions within the city and to the potential short comings of income as an indicator in absence of other metrics.

In feedback provided during the focus groups, residents agreed that the city has experienced significant economic growth with new infrastructure, business and commerce attraction and targeted higher-end home development in recent years. But many also noted that much of this development and growth has little-to-no benefit for the already underserved segments of the population.

Poverty

Poverty rates, as previously mentioned, have generally improved over this past decade. The child poverty rate decreased from 26.6 percent to 21.6 percent from 2012 to 2019. In 2019, this equated to 2,873 children in poverty. For the working age disabled population of Boynton Beach, the poverty rate declined from 26.0 percent to 17.3 percent. The most substantial increase in poverty rates, of the few that occurred, was within the senior citizen (65+) community of Boynton Beach - an increase from 10.4 percent to 11.4 percent. Analyzing particularly vulnerable populations like elderly and the disabled provide a significant measure of how effective the city has been at combating poverty and providing opportunity.

The poverty rate is an area where much progress has been made regarding the longstanding disparities, and yet much remains to be done. As is the case with many indicators assessed herein, the disparity is most evident when analyzing and comparing figures for the Black and African American population. In just four short years from 2015 to 2019, the poverty rate for Black residents declined by an impressive 9 percentage points (30.5 percent to 21.4 percent) - and still, Black residents were experiencing poverty at over double the rate of their White, Non-Hispanic neighbors⁷. The poverty rate of Hispanic residents has been steadily declining over the past decade and has been the “middle” category of the three major racial/ethnic groups. A significant influence on poverty status is the make-up of households and families; families with just one householder and no spouse present are more likely to experience poverty. Hispanic families and Black and African American families are more likely to have a single householder. These families experience higher rates of poverty, and this is especially true for homes where only a mother is present. Considering that

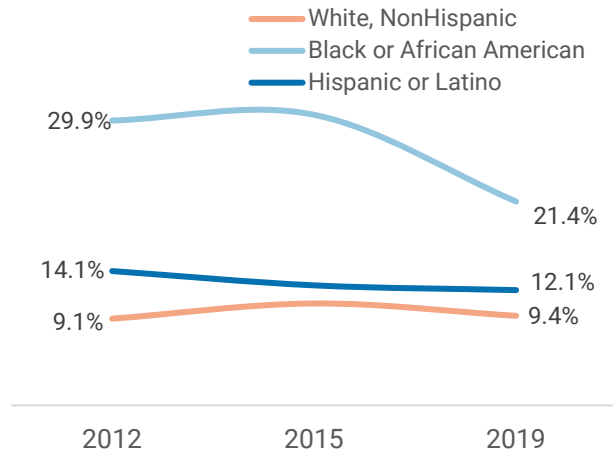
⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 2019, 1-Year Estimates. <https://www.data.census.gov>

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey. <https://www.data.census.gov>

women in general experienced slightly higher poverty rates (14.9 percent to 12.4 percent for men), single mothers and their children are especially at risk of poverty.⁸

Overall, about 10,400 people in Boynton Beach in 2019 were below the poverty line. Despite being almost half of the population, 34 percent of that count were White, Non-Hispanic individuals, 47 percent were Black or African American, and 14% were Hispanic or Latino. This raises the concern that while efforts to curb poverty (especially since the years following the recession) have been effective, targeted attention is needed to make that progress more equitable. An area that will continue to be of particular interest across pillars, is the Heart of Boynton; this name refers to the corridor between I-95 and US-1 as well as several blocks to the south. As one community stakeholder put it, "...all is not well in the Heart of Boynton...". While the overall poverty rate in Boynton Beach in 2019 was about 14 percent, that figure nearly doubles to 26 percent for the Heart of Boynton area. The Heart of Boynton is also where median incomes are generally lower than the rest of the city.

Poverty Rates by Race and Ethnicity



Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates

Labor Force

A consistent part of the discourse surrounding economic development, especially when speaking about individuals, has been the insistence that hard work and self-determination – and less so structural factors and economic conditions – ultimately play the deciding role in economic outcomes like one’s station, stability, and prosperity. Much of the data available, however, indicates a lack of nuance in that position. The labor force participation rates identify the proportion of residents that are either working or actively seeking work. Some segments, like Black and African American residents, have the highest labor force participation, highest unemployment rates and are simultaneously earning the lowest incomes. Shifts in these metrics have followed a similar pattern as that described in incomes for Boynton Beach – after a universal drop in employment (and increase in unemployment) in the years following the 2008 recession, the workforce stabilized at previous levels by 2019. An important takeaway from these metrics is the simple fact that people who are struggling financially in Boynton, are working, often more than one job, and are generally trying to take the same basic wealth-building steps that their neighbors have taken. There is also little data available for the city to account for the types of informal obligations and work performed by residents that does not translate into their incomes and earnings. For example, many community workers have mentioned the need to consider Boynton residents who are caretakers for their elderly relatives so that support can be provided to keep that responsibility from hindering their economic growth.

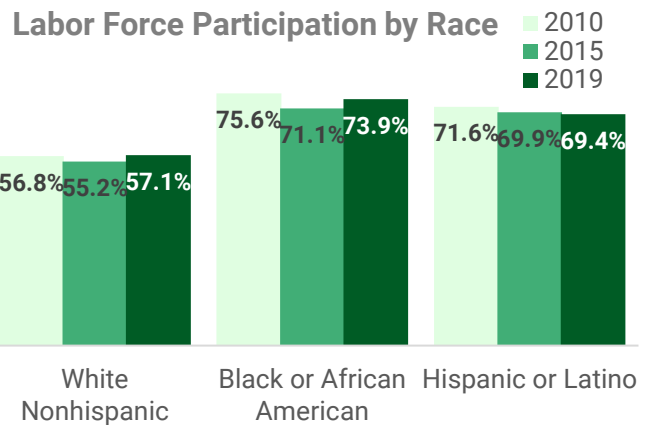
Another example of informal, unrecorded work is the labor that mothers perform for their children which, either through necessity or societal norms, results in women participating in the formal workforce at lower rates. Remarkably, at 80 percent labor force participation, women in Boynton Beach were just five percent lower than men. For women with children under six years, that figure

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 2019, 5-Year Estimates. <https://www.data.census.gov>

drops down to 69 percent.⁹ It should be noted that this relationship existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic; since then, there have been renewed calls for childcare support services to be implemented, bolstered, and expanded to help parents (but especially women) deal with the burden of caring for their young children while having to continue to provide.

The issue of willingness to work not translating into financial success, is created by influencing factors that limit access to higher paying jobs and occupations.

Educational attainment, for one, was identified as a fundamental element to enabling an equitable job landscape – those with higher levels of formal education and training were less likely to be unemployed and more likely to have higher earnings. Finishing high school and even just having attended “some college” were seen to increase average expected earnings; the median earnings for a high school graduate were about \$27,000, for residents with a Bachelor’s degree, that rose to about \$49,000, and for residents with a graduate degree the median earnings was about \$53,000. It should also be noted that disability status also plays a major role a person’s job prospects and economic mobility. This is true for residents with physical impairments as well as those with neurodivergent conditions – targeted attention will likely be needed to enable these groups to become financially successful.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates

Dominant Industry Sectors and Occupations

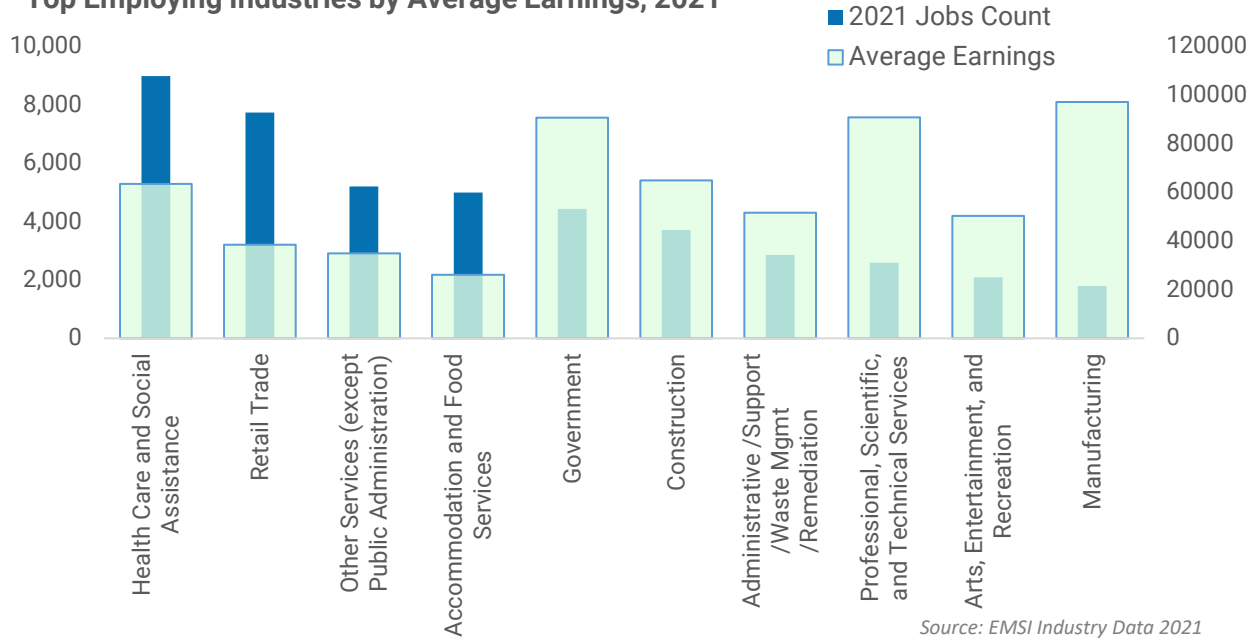
While educational disparities drive issues of job-choice, there is also much to be said about the job landscape itself. Retail trade in Boynton Beach represents a significant segment of jobs and businesses, with about 17.4 percent of jobs in this sector in 2021. While contributing the largest percentage of individual establishments (13.2 percent) and the second highest job count in the city (behind Health Care and Social Assistance), the Retail sector also offers just the seventh highest average earnings (\$38,424) of all the city’s sectors.¹⁰ Many may point to the low barriers of entry to this sector as justification for low earnings, but realistically the difference between a retail worker staying in their current field or moving to a higher paying sector can be something as simple as a short-term certification or training process. There are other higher paying industries that have relatively low entry barriers – like construction, for example. Switching career paths could provide immediate income boosts to the thousands of workers currently in low-wage, unreliable positions. This kind of support and service are provided by organizations working in Boynton Beach, like CareerSource, which have achieved impressive results with the residents that take advantage of them. That said, more work is needed to make people aware of the possibilities available to them especially for those that have left their educational careers behind and have been in the workforce for years.

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey. <https://www.data.census.gov>

¹⁰ EMSI Business Analyst. Occupation Snapshot. <https://www.economicmodeling.com>



Top Employing Industries by Average Earnings, 2021



In relation to occupations, independent of industry, most workers living in Boynton Beach (82 percent) are in management, service, and sales/office jobs¹¹. The construction/maintenance and production occupations are overshadowed by the other major sectors in terms of overall job counts, further indicating the need for diversification.

The disparities in income and poverty become relevant when examining the racial and ethnic distribution across occupations. For example, the “white-collar” jobs like business, management, arts, and office jobs are dominated by the White, Non-Hispanic population. In contrast, Hispanic and Black residents are highly concentrated in the service and food accommodation jobs¹² – these are positions that are typically low-wage, lack benefits like healthcare and paid time off, and also are less resilient in the face of economic downturn. It should be noted, amidst this discussion of income levels and work opportunities that any progress made in this area will be directly affected by several other mitigating factors that must be addressed before an equitable economy is possible. Burdens like housing and healthcare costs, while discussed as separate topics, directly affect a person’s economic standing – what does \$30,000 annual income mean when \$15,000 was spent on rent? What does it mean to be employed full-time if one is still afraid to visit a hospital or clinic because they don’t have insurance, or they cannot take time off from work to address individual or family health concerns?

To the extent possible, increasing wages and advocating for/incentivizing higher pay for workers will have a direct impact on people’s daily lives – especially those struggling near the poverty line. More indirectly, but widely recognized as a viable path forward, is the diversification of jobs and career paths. This effort could target both children and adults. In our residents focus groups, 50 percent of participants agreed that professional development and job training were the greatest obstacle to economic opportunity. For example, residents noted that they remembered having taken courses during their high school years that prepared them for work and “the real world” – the consensus was

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey. <https://www.data.census.gov>

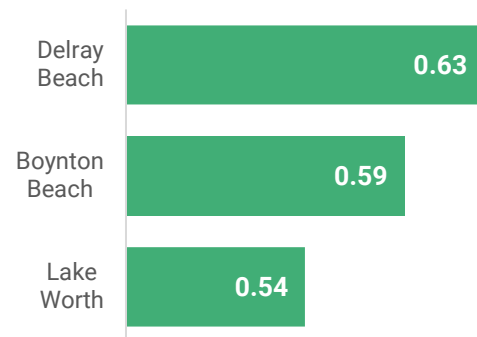
that these opportunities made them more successful in their adult lives. Starting in high school, students can be given opportunities to gain skills and credentials that would prepare them for a life that does not necessarily include college. Partnership with the private sector can help develop pipelines for industries in the city while simultaneously giving Boynton’s youth a foundation to build on. As it pertains to adults, the aim should be to help low- and middle-income adults transition out of their current occupations and into new career paths.

Transportation

Given the spread of industries in the city, there seems to be a mismatch of the talent and jobs in the city. With such a large percentage of Boynton Beach’s adults having attained secondary and post-secondary education levels (89 percent), a wide majority of those living in Boynton Beach (88.5 percent) commute to other places for work. Inversely, most of the people working in the city (87.7 percent) do not also live there; the largest contributor to Boynton Beach’s workforce is Boca Raton.¹³

This mismatch translates into the transportation challenges that are present in many cities across south Florida. Researchers working in this area have highlighted the need for cities and businesses to begin seeking options to link workplaces, housing, and recreation more cohesively.¹⁴ This is a space in which, to be fair, most cities in the region have need for improvement. To use Boynton as an example, only about two percent of residents (working age) reported using public transportation for their commute, and just one percent of residents were able to get by without using a car for their other trips.

H+T Index of Local Municipalities



Source: Center for Neighborhood Technology - H+T Index Maps

Commercial Real Estate and Consumer Trends

Interestingly, based on data that accounts for the pandemic, the city is currently in an optimal position to attract desirable industries and boost existing industries. Specifically, it seems that Boynton is seen as an attractive place for businesses requiring office space. While Boynton is home to one of the smaller pools of office buildings in the county, vacancies for these locations are at a 14-year low (8.2 percent) and market rent per square foot has increased significantly, to \$31.85 per square foot as of Q1 of 2021. That pool is currently being increased with several projects currently in the pipeline – even so, projections show that vacancies will remain low, indicating that employers are likely to quickly move into the city.¹⁵ In other words, the office real estate market in Boynton Beach is likely as primed as it has ever been. With Boynton Beach becoming a destination for employers to settle, some forward-thinking strategies like implementation of co-working space (which have grown in popularity in recent years) and a more robust digital infrastructure can help capture this momentum for the city’s benefit.

An inverse trend can be seen in retail commercial real estate; market rent per square foot continues to rise past historical highs to \$28.91 per square foot, even as vacancies increased from 2.7 percent in 2019 to 5.3 percent in Q1 of 2021. This dynamic is not particularly sustainable and will see retailers

¹³ U.S. Census Bureau. 2018. OnTheMap – Inflow/Outflow data. <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>

¹⁴ Ford T. & Schuetz J. The Brookings Institution (2019). Workforce housing and middle-income housing subsidies: A primer. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2019/10/29/workforce-housing-and-middle-income-housing-subsidies-a-primer/>

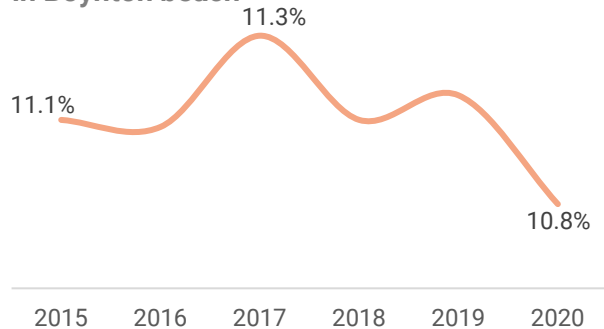
¹⁵ COSTAR. Commercial Real Estate Analytics. <https://www.costar.com>

struggling to remain in the city. Because this is an issue being seen around the nation inspiration can be found in the success of several strategies being implemented in metropolitan areas. For one, cities like San Francisco and Baltimore have seen some success in inserting themselves into the negotiation and deliberation of retail leases. One option is to negotiate with landlords on behalf of renters to help ensure that prices remain in an affordable range. Another route would be the “master leasing” of some of this space and the subsequent sublease to deserving business; in this scenario the city would absorb the losses in rent cost so that business can afford to stay in place. A more significant move would be to buy some of the available space and transferring it to a land trust or bank to be managed in perpetuity. These arrangements can be altered and designed to meet the needs of the city and would also ensure that some of this real estate will remain potentially available to all – not just large corporations and businesses. This notion is crucial in trying to drive the impending development in an equitable direction for all of Boynton’s residents.

One of the more nuanced findings to come from the commercial market analysis, is the shift in shopping trends – despite the numerous pressures on businesses like work force shortages and decreased foot traffic, business vacancies are continuing to decline¹⁶. This indicated a need to further investigate the state of commerce in the city.

For one, e-commerce furthered its hold over consumers over the course of the pandemic. This has implications for retailers and businesses that rely on foot traffic to drive commerce. Moreover, shoppers seem to be seeking a different kind of experience when they visit physical store fronts. Malls and neighborhood centers (standalone shops with isolated parking lots) have both seen significant decline in occupancy according to COSTAR’s underwriting reports – indicating concerns of popularity or foot traffic on the tenant-end. Strip malls (clusters of 10-20+ stores with outdoor walkways), on the other hand, have seen a rise in occupancy in the final quarters of 2020. This suggests that shoppers are increasingly seeking more out of their trips to the store. For instance, on a trip to get a haircut, someone may also be interested in getting a bite to eat next door and browse some clothing stores directly afterwards. Delivering this kind of experience to consumers will be key to supporting the large retail sector in the city. To deal with this hybrid era of online shopping and in-person visits, certain measures like the implementation of cutting-edge websites and interfaces may be necessary as many establishments currently are behind in this or lack a website altogether. To help service these establishments in need, coordination with the small business service providers could prove beneficial. The city should also be cognizant of the shift in consumer habits and thus encourage zoning transitions to the strip mall format where appropriate. Placing manufacturers in areas seeking to boost foot-traffic where it does not already exist has proven to help these kinds of initiatives in other cities like San Francisco and Greater Boston¹⁷. These are businesses that sell their own goods but don’t necessarily rely on foot-


Percent of Business Addresses Vacant in Boynton beach



Source: USPS data via PolicyMap

¹⁶ PolicyMap. Business Vacancies. <https://www.policymap.com>

¹⁷ Preuss I. (2021). Hardware, handbags and hot Sauce: How Small-Scale Manufacturing Can bring Downtowns Back. <https://www.governing.com/community/hardware-handbags-and-hot-sauce-how-small-scale-manufacturing-can-bring-downtowns-back>



traffic to make a sale; as interested people come to see and watch, foot traffic is built up naturally to the benefit of retailers in the area.

Recommendations:

To mitigate some of the negative trends and enhance equitable opportunities for its residents, the city and partner organizations can advocate for higher wages, harness the momentum of the shifting commercial real estate market to shape the city's industries, seek alternate leasing strategies to help retailers stay in place, and work with local businesses to develop and implement digital components like websites and online ordering, but also collaborate with providers to build small business resilience.

Through diversity and inclusion efforts, swaths of residents can be enabled to move into better paying, more secure jobs as well as training opportunities. By working with existing organizations and boosting their efforts, new pathways can be extended to previously neglected populations. Specifically, an effort to transition low-income workers out of service occupations and the retail industry will help close the disparities observed in income and poverty. To do this, firstly, it will be important to encourage retailers and businesses to do more for their workers; this would certainly mean higher wages, but it also importantly includes enhanced benefits and shifted policies like health care coverage and paid time off, to help workers in Boynton Beach deal with the various burdens they encounter simply by virtue of being low-income. Moreover, a targeted strategy may be necessary to attract businesses in higher-wage sectors as well as to incubate and accelerate businesses identified to have high growth potential and value – both in terms of revenue as well as worker earnings.

The strategic shepherding of desired industries and businesses is in line the city's "place making" efforts. Given the prime and peculiar nature of Boynton's commercial real estate market, the city finds itself in a critical position to harness and direct some of the momentum for its benefit. As it relates to office space, this prime real estate can be used to attract specific desired businesses to the city. Co-working spaces, which have become popular in the current era of hybrid working, are an example of a use of office space that will be attractive to many; these spaces would be shared by different companies allowing several parties to benefit from the desired space. Retailers, on the other hand, will likely need support from the city to stay competitive. To reiterate, market rent is climbing at a time when less businesses are occupying the land – this may call for the city to insert itself into leasing agreements either through negotiating terms, master leasing and sub leasing, or moving the land into a type of trust or bank to be managed.

Because the nature of shopping itself has shifted in Boynton, as it has all over, physical retailers hoping to maintain physical storefronts will have to supplement that with digital components like a website and online ordering. These businesses will likely need digital support services to create modern websites and enable online purchasing; the local SBDC can help facilitate these services. The city can also help businesses ride the wave of strip mall popularity (and decline of neighborhood centers and malls) by encouraging zoning transitions that would provide for more clustered shops.

Education

The fact that educational opportunities and attainment have been referenced multiple times in previous sections is indicative of its importance and impact on other quality of life issues. A solid education system will equip the youth with the desire to go far in life, while simultaneously supplying them with skills to succeed wherever their path ultimately leads. Moreover, the short- and long-term education of adults had tremendous impact on individual, household, and family prosperity. Educational attainment correlates with employment,

earnings, homeownership prospects and housing quality, but is also linked to the other pillars of individual and community well-being – health and safety.¹⁸ Education is often referred to as an investment in human capital. Education typically leads to better jobs, higher earnings and many other benefits, including better health insurance, which leads to better access to quality health care. Higher earnings also allow workers to afford homes in safer neighborhoods as well as healthier diets.

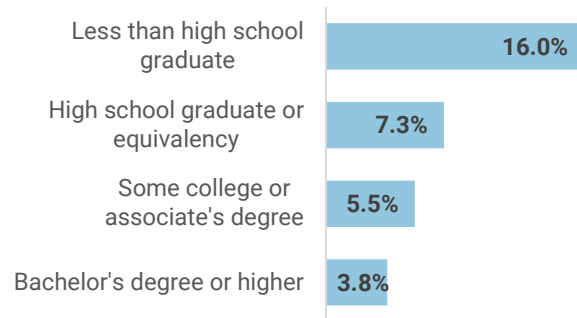
Although every level of education plays an important role in the life of a person, many instinctively focus on the K-12 level when considering the state of Boynton’s education system. And while that does encompass a large part of the topic, it’s imperative to keep in mind that a successful education delivery system prepares and enables people of all ages, at all levels, and without any singular outcome in mind.

Educational Attainment

As mentioned previously, the highest level of education a person attains is directly connected to the income they can expect to bring in; high school graduates in Boynton earn a median of \$27,000 annually, that figure shoots up to \$49,000 for those with Bachelor’s degrees. Most residents in Boynton Beach have at least earned a high school diploma (89 percent). Black and African American residents are the most likely demographic to end their formal education at this point (about 30 percent) – slightly more women than men fall into this category, a difference of about 500 residents. Moreover, a significantly larger proportion of the Black (22.8 percent) and Hispanic (13.3%) residents had ended their education without a high school diploma when compared to the White, Non-Hispanic population (5.4 percent).

At that same tier, data indicates that many residents do not pursue GEDs or alternative credentialing. The Hispanic community, in particular, does seem to take advantage of that opportunity; despite being a minority in the city, Hispanic residents have sought out GEDs and alternate credentials at nearly six times the rate of their Black and White, Non-Hispanic neighbors. This fact should be taken into account when considering the above figures of adults without a high school diploma – within the Hispanic community, many of those individuals likely sought out GEDs instead.

Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment



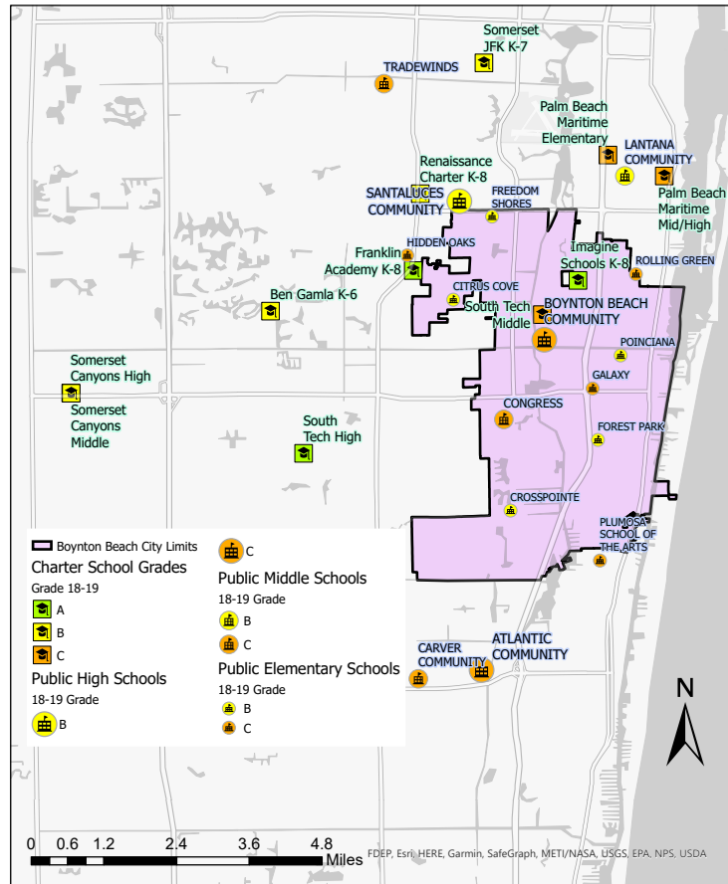
Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates

¹⁸ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/emp/chart-unemployment-earnings-education.htm>; Anna Zajacova & E.M. Lawrence. (2018). The Relationship Between Education and Health: Reducing Disparities Through a Contextual Approach. Annual Review of Public Health. 2018 Apr 1; 39: 273–289.

Disparities in K-12

The K-12 system is our first interaction with educational systems and does build the foundation for so much of what residents will achieve in their future. In Boynton Beach, it seems that families with the means to do so, tend to send their children to non-public schools either in the area or further away. This has resulted in a bifurcated system wherein students with wealth or resources are funneled out of the public schools. As only the economically disadvantaged students continue to attend public schools, enrollment numbers in public schools decline and charter schools expand, resources are being diverted from an already underfunded public education system. This, of course, impacts Black and Hispanic students in Boynton’s public schools who are more likely to come from families with limited resources. 78.9 percent of Boynton’s schools are majority-minority schools and 68.4 percent are majority-economically disadvantaged.

2018-2019 GRADES FOR SCHOOLS SERVING THE CITY OF BOYNTON BEACH



A high school education or equivalent is often the first barrier residents will encounter in their search for good work. With the graduation gap as it stands, it’s difficult to expect equitable economic outcomes. Because of the way attendance boundaries are laid out, as well as the presence of several charter schools, it’s difficult to speak about K-12 outcomes at the city-level. Instead, we are able to analyze the individual schools in the area. With that in mind, the first important observation is that high school graduation rates have been generally rising over the past decade. With just slight dips along the way leading up to 2019, students in Boynton in charter schools and public schools alike were graduating at increasingly higher rates. This is true for female/male students, as well as English language learner (ELL) students. For example, from 2016 to 2019 the graduate rate at Boynton Beach community high rose from 85.0 percent to 88.4 percent.

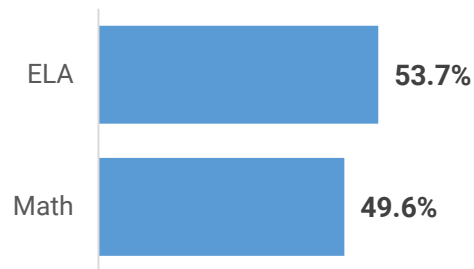
At a more granular level, disparities in graduation rates that have existed for years have begun to diminish. Black students have historically graduated at lower rates in Palm Beach, behind Hispanic and Latino students and then White, Non-Hispanic students. Since 2015 especially, these rates have all risen and approached a more even distribution; by the 2019-20 school year, the Hispanic graduation rate increased from 79.5 percent to 87.6 percent and the Black graduation rate increased from 73.7 percent to 87.6 percent compared to the White Non-Hispanic graduation rate which increased from 90.7 percent to 94.3 percent. Over the course of the pandemic, graduation rates continued to increase but so too have dropout rates – a trend that began years before the pandemic.

This is likely linked to the reduction in alternate completion methods. For example, the number of students receiving Certificates of Completion or being allowed to stay enrolled past the 4-year mark have both declined. In previous years, these options would have provided a route to graduation whereas now these students are likely forced to drop-out. In Palm Beach County schools, the Hispanic and Black communities have historically had nearly twice the cohort drop-out rate. In the 2019-20 school year, the Hispanic cohort dropout rate climbed to 8.2 percent, nearly triple that of their white neighbors (3.4 percent). This may indicate a need for a more targeted drop-out prevention model. Currently, there are some measures in place to help curb this trend. For instance, Quantum High school serves as a drop-out prevention facility for at-risk students. However, the need for support likely extends outside of the school in the form of access to technology and computers, availability of parents and mentors, as well as the need for culturally sensitive approaches for ELL students and immigrants.¹⁹

Decline in FSA scores

The pandemic has created additional challenges to an already strained public education system; distance learning, chronic attendance issues, and certainly the inability to adequately test and gauge students all played a role in making 2020 a “lost” year of data. While many schools across the state have reported scores in various assessments, requirements to collect this information have been eased or lifted to accommodate the challenges of teaching during a crisis. However, there is already indication from student testing that the past couple years are likely to have undermined some of the learning progress made over the past decade. The Florida Standardized Assessment is a benchmark test used to identify the progress made by students, specifically in Math and English Language Arts. These scores are eventually used to help decide graduation eligibility as well. Prior to the pandemic, FSA scores in Boynton for math and ELA (English Language Arts) were on the rise; since 2015 most schools had increased their passing rates in these areas, some as high as 20 percentage points. 11 schools servicing Boynton had increased their rates in math and 12 schools had increased in English language arts. However, that progress is overshadowed by the significant drops that occurred in the 2020 school year. Staggeringly, schools in Boynton experienced double digit percentage decreases in Math scores. A less significant but still concerning drop was seen in ELA scores as well. This situation has implications for graduation rates moving forward, but there is also much to be said about the preparedness of these student cohorts as they progress into the workforce.²⁰ Relevant to this issue is announcement earlier this year by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis to abolish the FSA and replace it with a new type of assessment known as the FAST.²¹

Palm Beach FSA Passing Rate, 2021



Source: FL Dept. of Education - Student Assessment Data

¹⁹ Florida Dept. of Education. PK-12 Education Information Portal. <https://edstats.fldoe.org/SASPortal/main.do>

²⁰ Ibis

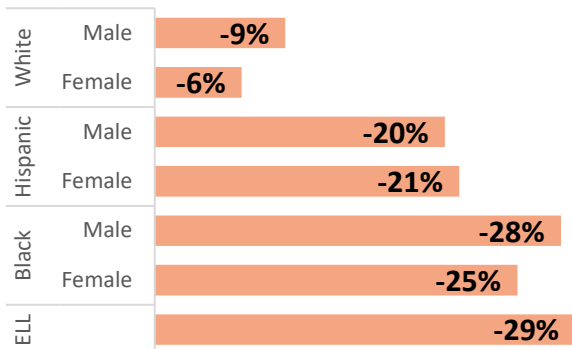
²¹ FLgov.com. (2021). <https://flgov.com/2021/09/14/governor-desantis-announces-end-of-the-high-stakes-fsa-testing-to-become-the-first-state-in-the-nation-to-fully-transition-to-progress-monitoring/>



It should come as no surprise that the disparities we see in other sectors also reflected in FSA scores. Black and Hispanic students as well as ELL students pass the FSA at lower rates than their White, Non-Hispanic peers – this is especially true at public institutions. During our conversations with education leaders, the discussion of proposed changes to the “concordant scoring” process shed new light on this topic. Students in Boynton Beach, if unable to achieve satisfactory scores on their FSAs, can reach graduation requirements via alternate assessments like the PSAT and EOC. Changes for upcoming school years have been proposed that would make these alternate scores more difficult to achieve by raising the threshold for a satisfactory score. Some experts made the point that more focus and attention must be given to students achieving strong scores on their FSAs, the first time around.

Change in FSA Pass Rate, '19-'21		
	Math	English
Elementary		
<i>Citrus Cove</i>	-17.6	-5.1
<i>Cross pointe</i>	-23.7	-7.3
<i>Crystal Lakes</i>	-18.3	-6.7
<i>Forest Park</i>	-17	-15.9
<i>Freedom Shores</i>	-16.3	-12.6
<i>Galaxy</i>	-20.3	-6.6
<i>Hagen Road</i>	-19.8	-2.7
<i>Poinciana STEM</i>	-18.7	-11.2
<i>Rolling Green</i>	-16.5	-3.4
<i>Sunset Palms</i>	-7.7	-2.2
Middle		
<i>Christa McAuliffe</i>	-15.3	-8.5
<i>Congress Community</i>	-7.8	-5.2
<i>Somerset Academy Canyons</i>	-25.4	-7.2
<i>South Tech Prep Academy</i>	-20.3	2.4
High		
<i>Ben Gamla-Palm</i>	-31.7	-5.7
<i>Imagine Schools Chancellor Campus</i>	-16.7	-6.6

Projected Drops in Graduation Rates FY22 Palm Beach County



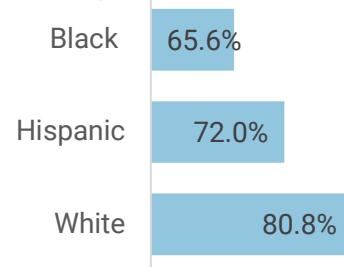
Source: Palm Beach County - Graduation Impact Data

While this is certainly true and would yield a significant positive turn for the county, the city must be cognizant of the fact that a significant number of students will slip through the figurative “net” in the years immediately following the change – students who in the past, would have been considered eligible for graduation. Moreover, it must be noted that research from the Palm Beach County School Board indicates this drop in graduation rates will be disproportionately concentrated among Hispanic, Black, and ELL students.²² The chart below demonstrates the projected drops in graduation rates, if the changes to concordant scores are approved.

²² Palm Beach County Schools. (2021). Potential Graduation Impact Data Presentation.

This issue of disadvantaged students potentially being set back even further, can be seen in other areas as well. The PSAT, for example, is an important part of any high school student’s education for a several reasons; aside from potentially leading to post-secondary options, it can serve as a concordant score, and is a free way for students and families to gauge preparedness for the SAT and ultimately college. Unfortunately, participation and preparation for the PSAT are limited by other factors like transportation (as many courses are held on weekends) and cost (as many courses, especially those considered high quality, tend to be quite expensive). While more current data is only accessible by those working within the county school system, the provided chart demonstrates the disparity in PSAT participation.

Palm Beach PSAT Participation by Race and Ethnicity



Source: FL Dept. of Education, 2013 Accountability Reports

Advanced Placement courses are another similar area. While the gaps in this area have been steadily closing, especially in South Florida school districts, White, Non-Hispanic students still have by far the highest participation and passing rate. The importance of closing this disparity is not lost on families, as many have come to understand that passing AP exams has the potential to directly translate to saved dollars once students go on to post-secondary. While not immediately obvious, attendance and discipline trends in Palm Beach (as well as other counties) also represent a kind of perpetuation of educational disparities; Black and Hispanic students represent larger proportions of the chronically absent (15 days or more per school year) as well as higher proportions of suspended students – this is especially true when looking at more severe disciplinary options like out-of-school suspensions.²³ This short list of areas demonstrate some of the ways in which disadvantaged students need targeted help. Certainly, all students need to be given the resources and opportunities to succeed, but in the interest of making that success as equitable as possible, these kinds of dynamics must be part of the discussion.

A major component of the discourse surrounding K-12 systems across Florida has been the need for instructional staff. Many institutions have implemented signing bonuses and other incentives to help draw the talent needed. Even so, shortages continue, and teachers are leaving the profession in concerning numbers. As it relates to Boynton Beach and Palm Beach County, this issue is more complicated than simply a matter of pay. At least when compared with other large Florida districts, Palm Beach County pays its instructional staff relatively well with average salaries around \$53,000 annually. In fact, Palm Beach may be in a sort of “sweet spot” where it benefits from regional influence on size and pay without being far south enough to deal with the costs of living of Miami or even Broward. As alluded to in the economic development pillar, the difficulties in recruiting staff to the region is quite likely linked to the ongoing spike in housing costs. Recruiting out of state teachers (a very common practice) has been made incredibly difficult when no guarantee of affordable housing can be made. In the context of these challenges, a December 2021 report indicated that the Palm Beach School District is setting aside millions of dollars to recruit teachers from overseas.²⁴ Other districts are implementing innovative solutions that directly address the recruitment

²³ Florida Department of Education. (2021). School Report Cards. <https://edudata.fldoe.org/>

²⁴ CBS12. December 21, 2021. Amid Teacher Shortage, PBC Looks to Hire Internationally. <https://cbs12.com/news/local/amid-teacher-shortage-pbc-looks-to-hire-internationally>

challenges. In December 2021 Miami-Dade Public Schools that will include facilities for the middle school grades and workforce housing for District employees.²⁵

Adult Education

Education, of course, extends far past the 12th grade or even college. Working age adults gaining new skills and certifications has quantifiable and objectively positive impact on families and the city. Foundationally, the level of educational attainment and area of focus set the stage for a wide range of economic and social indicators. Most of Boynton’s population, 25 years and over, has attained their high school diploma or GED. As we move into the higher tiers of education like Associate’s and Bachelor’s degrees, disparities across racial and ethnic lines become apparent. This is especially true at the Graduate level, where Hispanic residents proportionally have the highest percentage of graduate degree holders, followed by White, Non-Hispanic residents, and Black residents. These tiers equate to higher earning job prospects and more opportunities, but the impacts go beyond that; for example, a correlation exists between health care coverage and higher educational attainment. This disparity is also directly linked to disparities in income and poverty.

While Boynton residents are earning higher-tier degrees at varying rates, data indicates that residents are reaching the “some college” level at similar rates. This indicates that other factors are causing students from the Black and Hispanic communities to stop end their college careers early more often. Targeted support for new and returning students could help close the gaps seen in the higher levels of education. Focusing on the segment of residents having attained Bachelor’s degrees, 61.7 percent first degrees were earned in the Science or Business fields.²⁶ Education degrees make up a significantly smaller (13.5 percent) share of degrees in the city. This kind of distribution is common for cities in the region, but in the interest of diversifying industries and occupations, and creating a competitive advantage for the area to attract businesses and talent, partnership with the private sector in Boynton Beach to create apprenticeships and internships can help widen and grow workforce pipelines.


While a formal education provides some hard results, the impacts of “up-skilling” and career path switching should not be understated. In fact, a 2021 report found that although workers with more education generally earn more, a good number of those without a college diploma are making more than college graduates. The research showed that 16% of high school graduates, 23% of workers with some college education, and 28% of associate’s degree holders earn more than half of workers with a bachelor’s degree. Other factors account for the differences, including age, field of study, occupation, gender, race and ethnicity, and location.²⁷

For a lot of families, especially those struggling economically, returning to school even part time can be unfeasible. As mentioned, short-term credentialing provides an alternative way to achieve quality of life improvements with minimal disruption to daily life. The city itself, as well as organizations working in the city, provide these kinds of options for residents – but awareness of these opportunities might be limited. One of the points repeatedly made by community leaders over the course of the assessment, was the connection between these kinds of small-scale efforts for adults and outcomes in the K-12 system. Many of the educational barriers that low- and middle-income

²⁵ Office of Communications, Miami-Dade Public Schools. December 10, 2021. <https://news.dadeschools.net/cmnc/new/32228>

²⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). American Community Survey. <https://www.data.census.gov>

²⁷ Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (CEW). (2021) The College Payoff: More Education Doesn’t Always Mean More Earnings. <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/collegepayoff2021>



families deal with can be addressed with the understanding of individual impediments and then targeting resource specific to the populations who are falling behind.

Recommendations:

The city can encourage and support a host of wrap-around services like affordable afterschool programs, community engagement efforts, and more digital connectivity services. Targeted efforts to help students, and especially minority students, reach their graduation requirements are also needed. Also, organizations like CareerSource have already been successful at helping adults further their education, but increased awareness of these services is needed.

Closing the graduation gap in the K-12 system may require a host of wrap-around services be implemented by community organizations. Specifically, affordable after school programs, apprenticeship and mentorship programs, counseling, and especially services to enable digital connectivity are examples of services and resources that students need to succeed. Childcare has been identified as one of the greatest burdens placed on families during this time, and certainly school age children are not exempt from that need. Community members repeatedly mentioned the need to keep younger children supervised and active but also to keep them invested in their own education. Mentorship and apprenticeship programs achieve these goals by empowering and uplifting children as well as providing them with marketable skills. In our discussions with community members and leaders, the closing of the city's Youth Empowerment center was noted with regret, as this facility seemed to hold the potential of serving as a venue for many of the needed services..

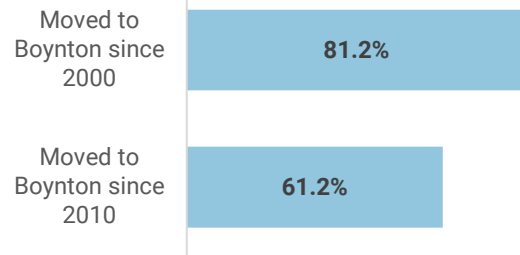
As the pressures of pandemic learning start to wane, it will become clearer to what extent interventions like drop-out prevention measures will be necessary, but regardless, addressing disparities in education outcomes calls for some targeted efforts to help at-risk students achieve the goal of graduation. Part of this could be a more robust data collection process that would allow tutors, instructors, and counselors to better identify the needs of these students. Preparation for standardized testing may need to be restructured – especially as shortages in staff and instructors continues. Short-term measures may also be necessary to help Black, Hispanic, and ELL students achieve concordant scores to curb the projected drop in graduation rates, if the concordant thresholds are to change. Because school choice is so closely connected to economic standing, services that help disenfranchised communities send children to alternative schools (like transportation) could help provide for a more equitable, less segregated landscape. Conversely, steps should be taken to make public institutions more attractive to a wider range of residents. The aim should be to dissolve the concentration of poor and minority students in public schools and of wealthier students in charter and private schools.

With many families managing with limited or no internet (about 4,000 homes completely lacked connection in 2019) and many more functioning without computers at home, an emphasis should be placed on internet infrastructure in the city, especially as digital connectivity has become invaluable in the wake of the pandemic, and will likely continue to be crucial in the changing economy. Several community centers, libraries, and organizations do provide help in this area with computer labs and assisting staff. These initiatives can be boosted in capacity and expanded by providing access in public spaces. An initiative to move digital capabilities from public spaces into homes would also have profound effects on youth and adult education.

Housing Affordability and Homeownership

The stability of a city’s housing market often serves as a significant indicator of well-being and quality of life for residents. A lack of a sufficient supply of housing—affordable to all members of the workforce—impedes an area’s ability to attract businesses and talent. It has been well-established in the research that having access to affordable and stable housing in good neighborhoods is associated with positive health, education and economic outcomes for individuals and families.²⁸

Boynton Beach Householders by Year of Moving-In



Source: U.S. Census Data via PolicyMap

Because all residents will inevitably interact with the housing market, careful management of the housing supply is imperative in creating an equitable landscape for all. Failure to provide for quality, safe, affordable housing for residents across the income-spectrum will result in negative outcomes in other areas of resident life. Education for example is made difficult, especially for youth, when housing is in jeopardy or unsafe. Likewise, any growth in incomes or job prospects are also mitigated when housing becomes too expensive.

Through our discussions with non-profit workers and resident focus groups it’s become apparent that the issue of housing and housing are on everyone’s minds. This is to say, even though many are not versed in the intricacies of the issue, most are becoming aware of the untenable levels rent, housing costs, and the affordable housing supply have reached. This should come as no surprise as cities all over the U.S. are struggling to handle their housing crises.

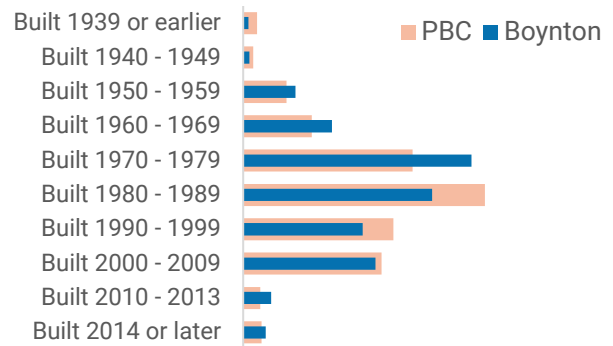
In 2021, the City completed a Housing Assessment Study, which highlighted many of the same housing challenges and impediments. The report emphasized housing affordability challenges for renters and homeowners, the lack of housing supply pipeline, the need for redevelopment and rezoning to address supply issues and in the context of a shortage of developable land in the city. The following sections will also outline some of these issues but with a greater focus on equity and opportunity for diverse groups.

²⁸ Brennan, Maya, Lisa Sturtevant and Patrick Reed. 2014. The Impacts of Affordable Housing on Education. Washington DC: National Housing Conference; and Viveiros, Janet, Mindy Ault and Nabihah Maqbool. 2015. The Impacts of Affordable Housing on Health: A Research Summary. Washington DC: National Housing Conference; Chetty, Raj and Nathaniel Hendren. 2015. The Impacts of Neighborhoods on Intergenerational Mobility: Childhood Exposure Effects and County-Level Estimates. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper.

Housing Supply

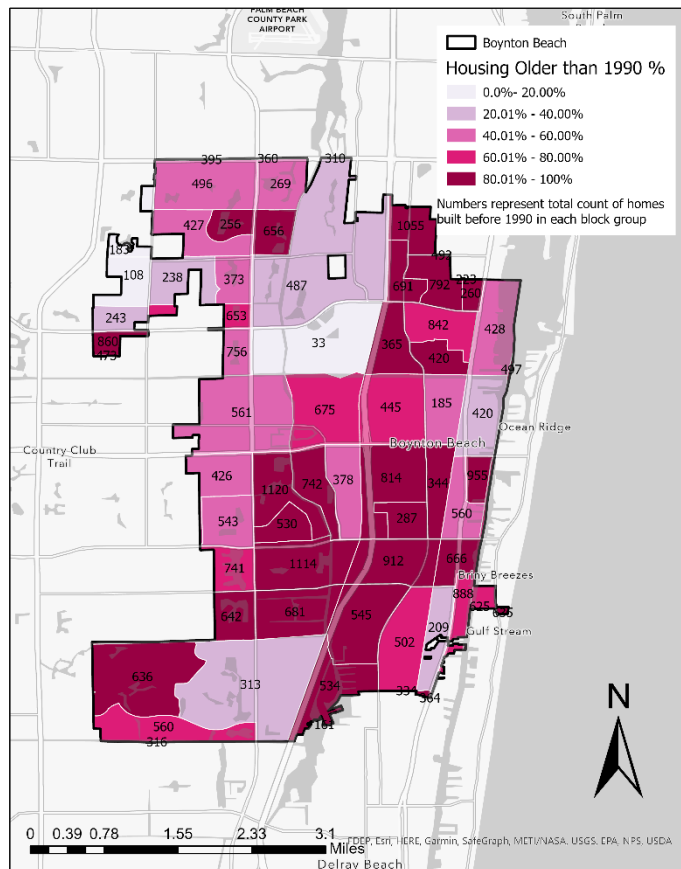
Most of Boynton’s housing supply is comprised of single unit detached homes and apartment buildings with 20+ units. The age and condition of Boynton’s units is similar to that of the overall county: most units (61.6 percent) were constructed between 1970 and 1999. Home construction from the most recent two decades accounts for about a fifth of all units in the city – just under 8,000 units. In just this most recent decade, the proportion of new units as a segment of the total housing pool in Boynton Beach has surpassed that of the overall county. While market conditions are the primary focus of our analysis and recommendations, an increasingly important facet of this discussion is the current difficulty in constructing homes in general. The cost of labor as well as the rising cost of materials have become serious constraints on development as pandemic pressures have taken effect.²⁹

Age of Housing in Boynton Beach and Palm Beach



Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019

CONCENTRATION OF HOMES BUILT BEFORE 1990 IN BOYNTON BEACH

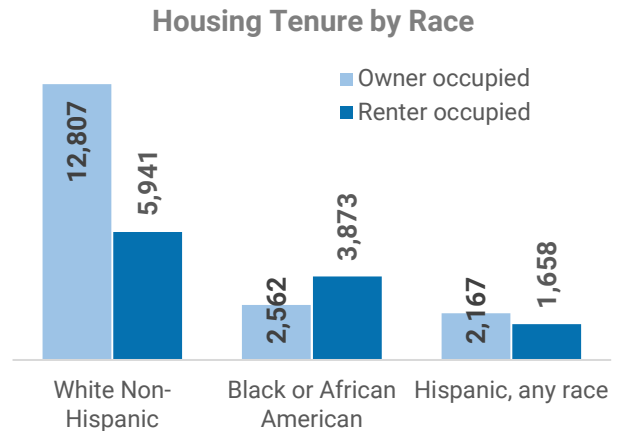


²⁹ Swanek T. 2021. New Report Finds Construction Contractors Struggling to Find Workers, Materials.

<https://www.uschamber.com/infrastructure/new-report-finds-construction-contractors-struggling-find-workers-materials>

Tenure

Although still a minority, the number of renters in Boynton Beach has been steadily increasing. It should also be noted that over 60 percent of householders in Boynton Beach, moved in their homes in the past decade. Renters are highly concentrated in and around the Heart of Boynton, while owner concentrations increase as one moves west and south of that area. Racial and ethnic disparities persist in relation to housing tenure. About 68 percent of White, Non-Hispanic householders own their homes. For Hispanic householders, that figure drops down to about 52 percent and for Black and African American residents, the ownership rate is just under 40 percent. As the distribution of householders shifted towards renters there has been a decrease in vacancy rates of both owner- and renter occupied housing units over the past decade. The decline in vacancy was more substantial for rented units. While homeowner vacancy rates fell from about 10 percent to 8 percent, renters saw a decline from 6 percent to just under 2 percent. This results in about 7,000 vacant homes in Boynton in 2019. The majority of these units are likely used for vacation purposes by people who do not live in Boynton year-round. According to AirDNA, a company that track vacation rentals, the number of active rentals in Boynton Beach has been stable over the past three years – around 300.³⁰ Because the homeowner and -renter experiences are so different, many topics like economic mobility/stability, poverty, and quality of life correlate with a resident’s tenure.

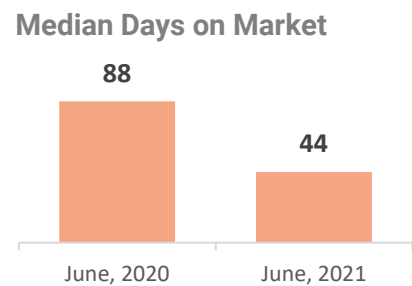


Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates

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Market Conditions

Prior to the onset of the current market conditions, housing values had already been rising in Boynton Beach since the end of the 2008 recession – from 2015 to 2019, median home value in the city increased by 50.8 percent. Home values continued to climb as the market shifted, but home valuation is ultimately just a combination of self-reporting and the appraisal process. Instead, analyzing the prices at which homes are actually being sold at provides deeper insight into what is occurring. From 2019 to 2020, the median sale price in Boynton Beach increased by about 18 percent. In just the first two quarters of 2021, 34.2 percent of homes sold went above their original listing price, an astonishing increase from just 6.9 percent in 2016³¹. Also, the amount of average number of days spent on market dropped by 50 percent from 2020 to 2021.



Source: Redfin Housing Data

As home purchase prices increased, so too has the willingness of buyers to overpay and quickly purchase. This is linked to the influx of investors and out-of-state movers coming to Boynton Beach and South Florida from all over. Many homeowners will naturally see this situation as opportune and maybe even ideal, but the reality is that these conditions will eventually lead to many Boynton Beach families being entirely priced out of the market. There is an obvious moral dilemma in that prospect,

³⁰ AirDNA. <https://www.airdna.co/vacation-rental-data/app/us/florida/boynton-beach/overview>

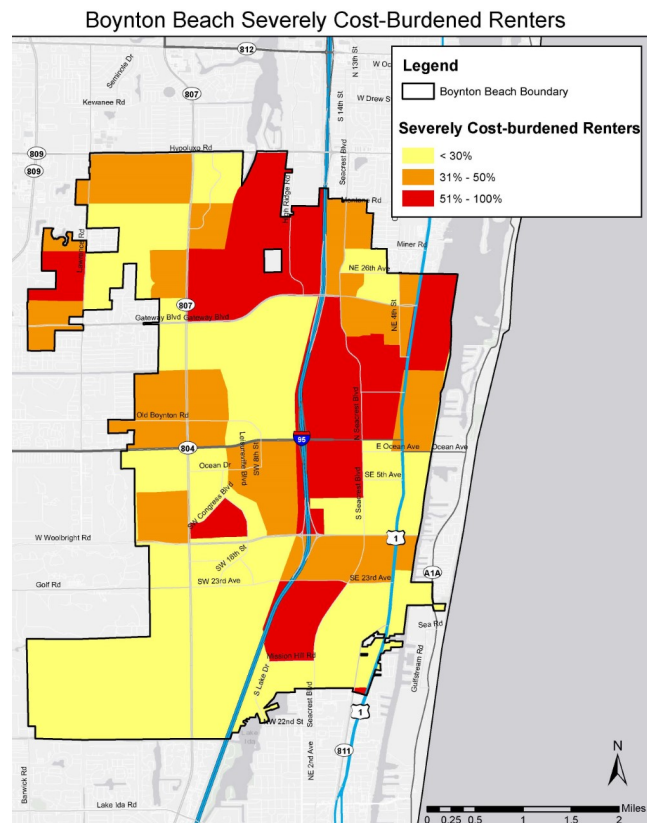
³¹ Redfin Housing data. (2021). <https://www.redfin.com/us-housing-market>

but there is also a clear danger to the city’s labor force and industries in making the city unlivable for people across the income spectrum. Purchasing a home is often viewed as a foundational, wealth building event for families. While many residents are earning more than they did in previous years, those gains will be basically negated for families seeking to purchase in this market.

Just as home sellers are the only potential winners in a market like this, landlords are the only ones who could possibly view the state of the rental market as positive. While market rent prices have been steadily increasing since 2010, the increase seen in just the past year is unprecedented for the city of Boynton Beach. Yet, that single year increase (about 23 percent) seems rather meek when compared with neighboring, similar cities like Del Rey Beach and Boca Raton. With these kinds of rental costs, we estimate that less than 10 percent of Boynton householders could reasonably transition from renting to owning right now – this conclusion is reached by summing three years’ worth of the median per capita income in the city. Assistance for these renters is available but stretched thin – housing vouchers are dispensed to capacity and waitlists for them are maxed out. Moreover, non-profits have a reported difficulty in householders using that aid as landlords reject housing vouchers. This is a market that could potentially eliminate all options for LMI families in Boynton Beach.

Housing Cost Burden

Housing affordability is a function of housing costs and income. The Department of Housing and Urban Development describes households that spend 30% or more of their monthly income on housing costs, as cost burdened.³² Homes spending 50% or more, are considered to be severely cost burdened. Over 12,000 households in Boynton (41% of all households) fall into these categories.³³ This cannot be overlooked when discussing other economic indicators and factors. For renters, about 57% of households are cost burdened and 32% are severely cost burdened.³⁴ Recalling the fact that most Black residents in Boynton rent their homes, we can conclude that Black residents in Boynton are much more likely to be spending unsustainable amounts on their rent – thus calling into question the progress made in other areas. Even owning the household does not completely spare families from this issue. While homes that have not taken out a mortgage experience very low rates of cost burden, just under 40 percent of homeowners with a mortgage are cost burdened. Historically, these figures have not



³² Housing and Urban Development. https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr_edge_featd_article_092214.html

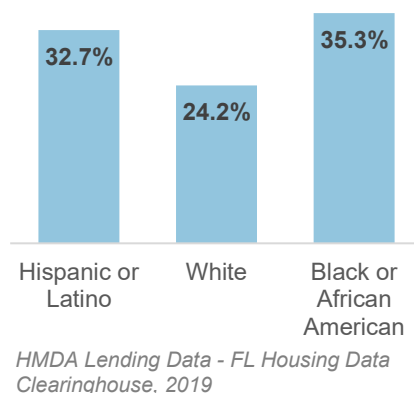
³³ U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). American Community Survey. <https://www.data.census.gov>.

³⁴ Severely cost burdened homes are included in the proportion of cost burdened homes

approached this level and certainly the amount of “severely cost burdened” households did not previously outnumber “cost burdened” homes.

While homeowners are also struggling to deal with housing costs, homeownership still remains the goal for many families. In fact, purchasing a home has historically been the preferred method of wealth building for Black and African American populations across the U.S. At every income quartile, Black Americans own less high-risk, high-yield assets instead preferring the reliability in this traditional option.³⁵ While much research has been conducted debating the efficacy of that practice, it should still remain the goal of the city to help families achieve home ownership should they seek it. In 2019, families in Boynton sought out hundreds of home purchase loans across a wide range of prices; ultimately, any family can find itself needing assistance in this important step.³⁶ But despite a widespread need for assistance, banks in the area approve purchase loans to different families at different rates. Specifically, Black and Hispanic families are denied these loans at higher rates than their White neighbors; this kind of disparity is widely seen in cities across the nation. While working directly with families to clear this hurdle can certainly be beneficial, this issue will likely require a policy change or initiative. Recently, the effort to widen the scope of the Community Reinvestment Act has gained new momentum; the goal is to have race added to the act to help deal with the lasting effects of systemic racism like redlined neighborhoods. At the municipal level, changes like these may be effective in dealing with vestiges of the past like lending discrimination.

Home Purchase Loan Denial Rate



Affordable Housing

Clearly, a central theme to the housing pillar has been affordability. Both purchasing and renting seem to be problematic for the average family in Boynton. Any attempts to solve this issue will first have to contend with the lack of an effective affordable housing pipeline. In our stakeholder meetings, various organizations and agencies working in the city insisted that municipal intervention is needed to develop that pipeline. The reality is that affordable housing has become scarce and difficult to attain, and addressing this issue requires significant political will, leadership and resources.

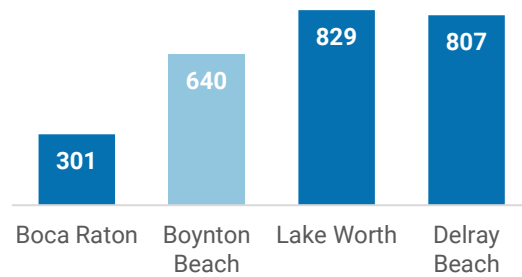
One prime example of this particular challenge of building *affordable*, workforce housing, is the way in which new developments fail to provide for that pipeline. Several experts have noted that while real estate development continues (with many units currently in the pipeline) almost none of it will be accessible to those in need, not only at the lowest income levels, but those with middle-range incomes. Also, organizations tasked with acquiring land and units are finding it increasingly difficult to compete with developers and investors who are snatching up every parcel they can – often simply to hold for speculation. Stakeholder participants also noted that a lack of coordination between

³⁵ Social Security Office of Policy. (2002). <https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/workingpapers/wp95.html>

³⁶ HMDA Lending Data via FL housing data clearinghouse. (2019). <http://flhousingdata.shimberg.ufl.edu/>

agencies has muddied the waters, making it difficult to achieve the goal of providing housing to residents across the income spectrum. Renovation of older homes for the affordable housing pool, which accounts for a lot of the work done by organizations, is also an issue as appraisal values continue to go up. Some homes end up being valued too highly for LMI families to own after the work is done. Without the authority of the city and some creative strategies, there is little that organizations can do to combat these phenomena.

Total Low-Income Apartments, 2020



Source: AffordableHousingOnline.com

Recommendations:

We recommend that the city implement measures to close the ownership gap and provide more direct rental assistance to families in need. Forms of rental control or influence may be necessary given the rise in costs. Efforts to grow the pool of affordable housing should also be boosted like refurbishment programs and even land trusts or banks.

Understanding that disparities in ownership and cost burden will translate into a variety of other inequities. Targeted programs should be deployed to help Black and Hispanic families on their path to homeownership. In the interest of creating an equitable economy, closing the ownership gap should be placed high on the list of priorities. It is imperative however, that families be educated and trained in the rigors and difficulties of owning a home – some agencies have reported families struggling to manage their homes and new costs after shifting from renter to owner. Lending practices may need to be influenced to enable this change. Some experts have recommended that new, community-based lenders be created and bolstered to provide funding streams for these disenfranchised communities. Addressing housing concerns in Boynton will also require that the topic of cost-burden be attached to all other discussions of earnings, poverty, etc. It often goes unsaid that while families may be in a home, there is a high likelihood that they are struggling to manage it.

While the city' has limited ability to managerially affect the housing market, some direct influence may be necessary to help protect residents. For homeowners, proliferation of Homestead Exemptions, for example, can help occupants currently owning homes avoid being forced out by the rise in values. Rent controls of varying types are also gaining traction across the state; notably the city councils of Tampa and St. Petersburg have begun talks on implementing such measures—acknowledging the untenable state of rent costs is imperative in providing for equitable housing. Also, similar to the commercial spaces, negotiating leases and rent increases may be within the city's purview.

In the long-term, a pipeline of affordable housing should be developed. This could mean things like requiring that new developments dedicate a certain percentage of units to this pipeline. Experts have noted that it will be necessary to demonstrate that affordable housing does not necessarily mean lack of profits; further analysis may be needed to help eliminate the conflict between funding and new affordable housing construction. Another method of providing for this pipeline can be the targeted renovation of older homes (of which there is a significant pool in Boynton Beach).



A historically successful option that has risen in popularity recently would be the establishment of a community land trust or bank. These are highly customizable entities, through which the city would be able to acquire new units and land (something that is proving to be nearly impossible for others, at the moment), transfer it to the land trust and manage it in perpetuity. This would provide for a type of public ownership of land with restricted resales – such that these homes would remain available to people who need them for many years to come. It’s important to understand that these non-profit entities are still capable of generating capital for homeowners and can be modified to meet the needs of the given municipality. These types of initiatives have been successful in the past and are showing success in many cities today like Boston, Durham, and Anchorage – where similar market conditions are being seen.³⁷

The 2021 Housing Needs Assessment Study of Boynton Beach zoomed in on the same challenges and came to similar conclusions related to the need to increasing the affordable housing supply. More specifically, the study recommendations included the approval of ADUs within the City’s development jurisdictions, the redevelopment of targeted commercial parcels, providing developer incentives related to affordable housing, and the establishment of a housing trust fund.³⁸ The more detailed recommendations of that study are in line with the Community Needs Assessment and if implemented with an equity lens, can reduce existing disparities.

³⁷ Coonerty R. (2021). An Opportunity for Long-Term, Equitable Local Economic Vitality. <https://www.governing.com/community/an-opportunity-for-long-term-eq>

³⁸ Zonda. (2021). Housing Assessment Study – City of Boynton Beach.

Criminal Justice and Safety

The confluence of multiple factors that contribute to disparities across communities have been well documented in research and media coverage. While the murder of George Floyd precipitated the resurgence of the debate and the drive to find solutions, inequality has been a long-standing challenge in American history and society. Whether our current public safety policies are a less explicit but equally destructive form of racism is one of the most important questions of policy, conscience and community that we face today.

In a Pulitzer-nominated book, criminologist Elliott Cuties points to three root causes of the violence that afflicts Black America: “economic dispensability of poor Americans of all races in an increasingly heedless global economy”; the lack of political influence in Black communities that “suffer violence the most”; and “the spread of a punitive and austere culture” that misallocates resources. The data presented in this section focuses on the results of these policies and confirms the demonstrable effects of enduring legacies that either neglect or purposefully exclude and marginalize Black Americans.

Crime Rates

One of the most notable positive trends in Boynton Beach over the last decade has been the significant reduction of crime. The City’s population increased by 17.8 percent during the period, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau. Violent crime decreased 10.4 percent in number (23.0 percent in rate), and property crime decreased 43.8 percent in number (51.7 percent in rate).³⁹ Rate is calculated per 100,000 population. The proportion of violent and property crimes as a percentage of all reported offenses has remained steady over time.

From 2010 to 2020, Boynton Beach experienced a significant decrease in both the number (38.7%) and rate (47.3%) of reported crimes.

In 2020, the city’s crime rate of 2,952 crimes per 100,000 population was 28.4 percent higher than Palm Beach County overall. There are several other cities with higher crime rates, including Delray Beach (4,188 rate), West Palm Beach (4,046 rate), and Lake Worth (4,273 rate). Boynton Beach ranks 13th in crime rate among cities in Palm Beach County.

Crime rates in Boynton Beach vary across neighborhoods, with higher rates in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. The over-representation of some racial minorities in the criminal justice system can in part be explained by socioeconomic factors, such as poverty, exposure to poor neighborhoods, poor access to public education, poor access to early childhood education and other conditions. Consistent with national findings, black Americans in Boynton Beach are over-represented in arrests for virtually all types of crime, with the exceptions of “driving under the influence”. In 2020, Black offenders accounted for almost 65 percent of the 535 arrests made by the Boynton Beach Police Department. This is a significant increase from 2010 when 48 percent of arrested offenders were Black. The overrepresentation is significant, as only 31 percent of city residents identified themselves as Black in the 2020 U.S. Census. In comparison, Black offenders accounted for 46 percent of arrests in Palm Beach County in 2020, up from 36 percent in 2010.⁴⁰

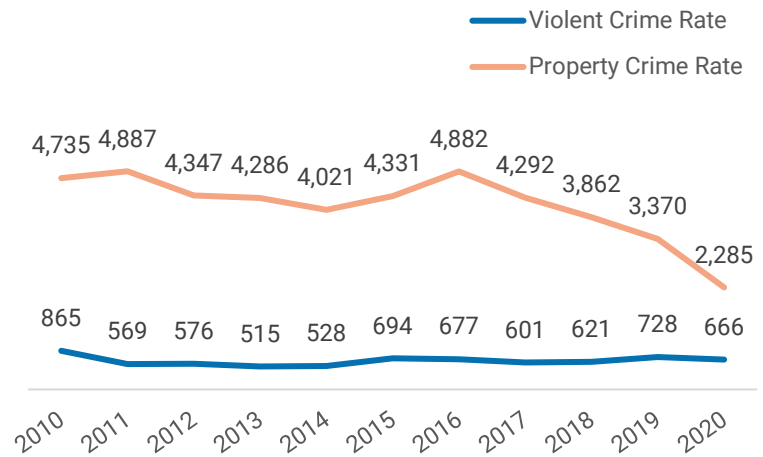
³⁹ Florida Department of Law Enforcement. UCR Annual Archives. <https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/FSAC/UCR/UCR-Annual-Archives>. Violent crimes include murder, sexual offenses, robbery, and aggravated assault. Property crimes include burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft.

⁴⁰ Florida Department of Law Enforcement. UCR Arrest Data. <https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/FSAC/CJAB-Home/Uniform-Crime-Report/Data-Archives/UCR-Arrest-Data>

According to the 2020 Census, 17.8 percent of Palm Beach County residents identified as Black by race. Crime data is not reported by ethnicity and Hispanic offenders are included in the "white" category.

The disparities are not unique to Palm Beach and Boynton Beach. One recent analysis found that Black people were arrested at a rate five times more than white people in 2018.⁴¹ The existence of disparities across communities in the United States and their persistence over time, are the product of complex factors including family structure and socio-economic conditions, often times created and sustained by unequal opportunities, cultural and structural racism. The use of zoning laws, racial restrictive covenants, and redlining, white flight and urban renewal initiatives delegated Black city residents to neighborhoods that were overlooked and underserved by local governments, financial institutions, and private developers. Meanwhile, federal policy incentivized homeownership for white families in areas that saw ongoing public and private investments.

Boynton Beach Crime Rates by Type of Crime (Per 100,000 Population)



Race and poverty have been consistently shown to intersect with the criminal justice system. A 2015 report of the Washington-based Institute for Policy Studies noted the “criminalization of poverty”, as “poor people, especially people of color, face a far greater risk of being fined, arrested, and even incarcerated for minor offenses than other Americans.”⁴² While poverty alleviation is often mentioned as one of the strategies to reduce crime, research has also shown that economic conditions alone cannot account for disparities. A 2016 analysis showed that while higher levels of wealth were associated with lower rates of incarceration, the likelihood of future incarceration still was higher for blacks than for whites at every level of wealth.⁴³ Indeed, the racial and ethnic makeup of U.S. prisons continues to look substantially different from the demographics of the country as a whole. From 2008 to 2018, the imprisonment rate dropped 28% among blacks, 21% among Hispanics, and 13% among whites. However, in 2018, black Americans represented 33% of the sentenced prison population, nearly triple their 12% share of the U.S. adult population.⁴⁴

Juvenile Crimes

Concurrently with the decline of overall crime rates, in recent years, Boynton Beach has experienced a decrease in juvenile crimes. For the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the Boynton Beach Police Department

⁴¹ ABC News analysis of police arrests nationwide reveals stark racial disparity. June 11, 2020. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/abc-news-analysis-police-arrests-nationwide-reveals-stark/story?id=71188546>

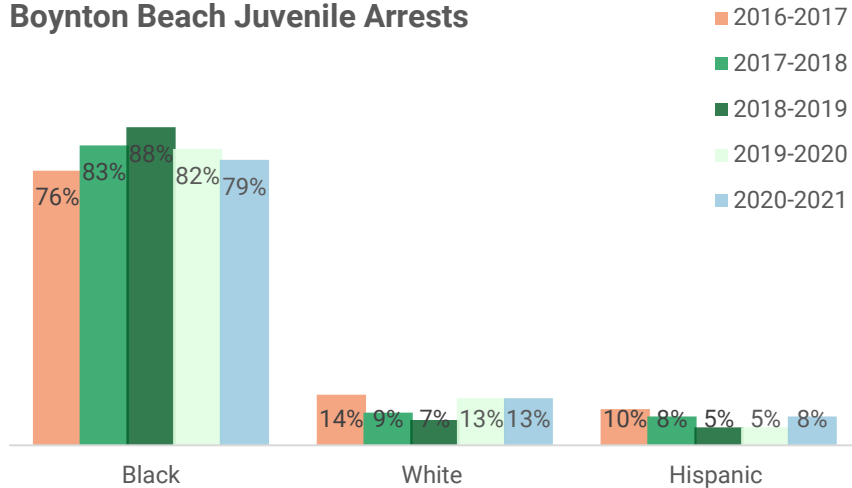
⁴² Karen Dolan with Jodi L. Carrm, Institute for Policy Studies. (2015). The Poor Get Prison: The Alarming Rate of the Criminalization of Poverty. Washington, D.C. <https://ips-dc.org/the-poor-get-prison-the-alarming-spread-of-the-criminalization-of-poverty/>

⁴³ Zaw, K., Hamilton D. & Darity, W. (2016). Race, Wealth and Incarceration: Results from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. Race and Social Problems. 8:103–115. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-016-9164-y>

⁴⁴ E. Ann Carson, U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2020). Prisoners in 2018. <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p18.pdf>

reported 87 juvenile arrests, down 53 percent from 2016-2017. The decrease in Palm Beach County was 51 percent.⁴⁵ In 2020-21, 59 youth accounted for the 87 arrests, indicating some youth were repeat offenders. Approximately half the arrests (44) were felony offenses, including burglary, auto theft, aggravated assault and others. Three out of four juvenile delinquents are typically male and the majority are Black.

Boynton Beach Juvenile Arrests



Source: Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. Delinquency Profile Dashboard.

Juvenile civil citation was enacted in Florida in 1990 as an alternative to custody for youth who commit non-serious delinquent acts. Opportunities for civil citation were limited to a few counties in the state until 2011 when the authorizing statute, s. 985.12, Florida Statutes, was amended to require the establishment of a civil citation or similar diversion program at the local level.

As of July 8, 2021, a civil citation, or similar prearrest diversion program, exists in all 67 Florida counties. Civil citation or similar prearrest diversion is a mechanism for first time youth offenders to enter a structured community diversion program with no arrest record upon successful completion.⁴⁶ If the youth is issued an alternative to arrest, they are diverted to receive services that address identified risk factors, with services including family counseling, drug screening, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment and others. Widespread use of civil citation and prearrest diversion programs has a positive effect on the criminal justice system and contributes to an overall reduction of the crime rate and recidivism in Florida. In Fiscal Year 2019-2020, the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice reported that the overall recidivism rate for youth completing the civil citation process was 4 percent - the lowest recidivism rate of any program type monitored by the Department.⁴⁷

Diversion programs focus on ameliorating the risk factors associated with youth delinquency. A 2009 study of 481 Black and White boys who were followed from childhood to early adulthood found that a higher incidence of early risk factors accounted for racial differences related to any juvenile arrest, as well as differences in violence- and theft-related arrests.⁴⁸ Research has shown that there is no single path to delinquency but several risk factors that may interact and augments each other to increase a youth's chance of offending. The risk factors span across individual, family, school,

⁴⁵ Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. Delinquency Profile Dashboard. <https://www.djj.state.fl.us/research/reports-and-data/interactive-data-reports/delinquency-profile/delinquency-profile-dashboard>; Statistics are based on agency location, e.g. Boynton Beach Police Department, not youth home address.

⁴⁶ Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. <https://www.djj.state.fl.us/partners-providers-staff/our-approach/florida-civil-citation>

⁴⁷ The Civil Citation Chapter of DJJ's Comprehensive Accountability Report (CAR) reflects outcomes including success rates and recidivism. The CAR is produced annually and is available online at <https://www.djj.state.fl.us/research/reports-and-data/static-research-reports/comprehensive-accountability-report>

⁴⁸ Fite, P. J., Wynn, P., & Pardini, D. A. (2009). Explaining Discrepancies in Arrest Rates Between Black and White Male Juveniles. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 77*(5), 916–927. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016626>

peer group and community domains, ranging from medical and physical problems, hyperactivity, low socioeconomic status, broken families, childhood abuse, weak socialization and many others.⁴⁹

The use of the civil citation alternative has expanded across the state and in Boynton Beach. The Boynton Beach Police Department first started issuing civil citations in FY 2014-15, when 11 percent of eligible youth received a civil citation. The percentage of youth receiving a civil citation almost tripled by 2020-21, although there was a decline from the previous year. It was in FY 2019-2020 when there were fewer youth arrested than youth issued an alternative.

In recognition of the need to address the risk factors affecting youth delinquency and work on solutions that prevent youth from coming in contact with the criminal justice system, a public health model to juvenile delinquency has emerged in recent years. As one researcher aptly observed, “entry into the juvenile justice system is the culmination of a range of risks, the failure of prevention efforts, and the absence of viable, community-based alternatives.”⁵⁰ The public health approach has two components. The first is a focus on crime prevention that uses early childhood intervention programs and other preventive measures to address the roots of crime and other childhood and family problems. The second is a criminal justice policy that involves sentencing defendants and treating prisoners in a manner more likely to rehabilitate offenders and reduce their repeat offending, i.e. diversion programs. The recommendations in relation to addressing the challenge of juvenile delinquency at the end of this section are based on the adoption and expanded application of policies and initiatives that incorporate the public health model components.

Policing

The Black African American community is divided in their attitudes towards the police. Tracking polls have found consistently low confidence in the police from Black respondents. Following the George Floyd killing, Black Americans' confidence in the police dipped to 18% in 2020. In 2021, 27% of Black adults in the U.S. indicated “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in the police, similar to the levels seen between 2014 and 2019.⁵¹ Drivers of crime are complex and members of communities with high crime rates may feel trapped between violence and law enforcement. While crime rates might be the highest in the most economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, which also have a high concentration of Black residents, distrust of the police may further decrease community safety. In our focus group, we heard some residents would like to see greater police presence in their neighborhoods, while others directly stated they want the police to “leave them alone”. These comments are heard across communities all over the country and the different perceptions of the role and need for policing are dependent on the particular experiences of residents. What influences these views is also the level of trust residents have in law enforcement with regards to their fairness and ability to prevent violence, protect lives and property, particularly in minority communities.

⁴⁹ Michael Shader. (2003). Risk Factors for Delinquency: An Overview. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/frd030127.pdf>

⁵⁰ Diane M. Myers & Anne F. Farrell (2008). Reclaiming Lost Opportunities: Applying Public Health Models in Juvenile Justice. Children and Youth Services Review. Volume 30, Issue 10, October 2008, Pages 1159-1177. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2008.03.002>

⁵¹ Jeffrey M. Jones. (2021). In U.S., Black Confidence in Police Recovers From 2020 Low. Social & Policy Issues, July 14, 2021. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/352304/black-confidence-police-recovers-2020-low.aspx>

Crime is geographically concentrated in particular neighborhoods and in more localized areas known as hot spots, which provides opportunities for targeted interventions both for juvenile and adult offenders. For example, in 2020-2021, the largest concentration of juvenile offenders in Boynton Beach was in zip code 33435, with the 77 juvenile arrests in that zip code accounting for two-thirds of the arrests in the three Boynton Beach zip codes. Evidence suggests that problem-oriented policing of hot spots can be effective. This zip code also has the highest concentration of Black residents (39 percent) and 84 percent of juvenile offenders were Black.

Zip Code	Count	% Arrested Black Youth	Black Population %
33436	31	48%	21.6%
33426	8	75%	19.1%
33435	77	84%	38.8%

Source: Florida DJJ. Delinquency Dashboard; 2019 ACS Estimates.

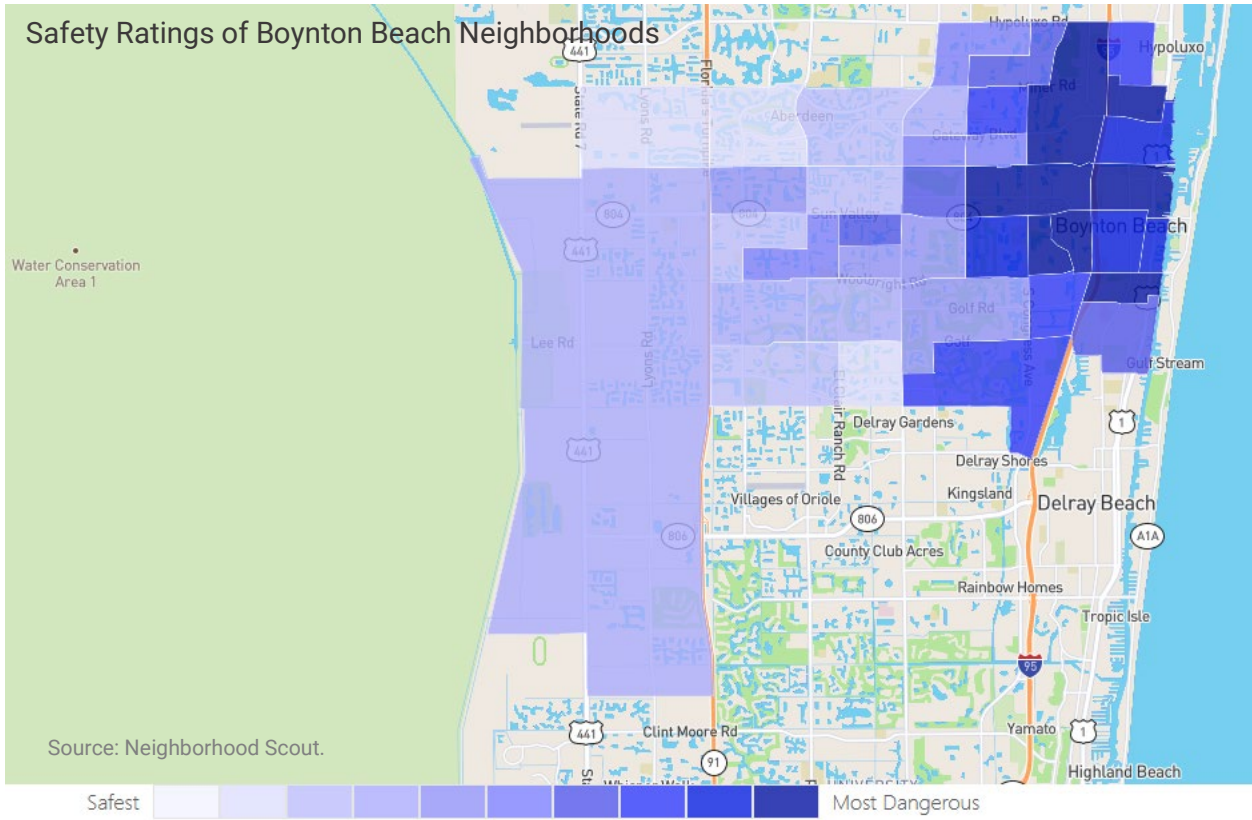
Awareness of the risk factors that contribute to crime are also important in developing appropriate interventions and responses to community challenges. As mentioned in other sections of this report, economic and educational disparities are major contributing factors. Previous sections showed higher poverty rates and lower educational attainment levels for Black and African American residents of Boynton Beach. Another contributing factor is family structure. According to 2019 American Community Survey estimates, 40 percent of children in Boynton Beach live in single-parent families. A small majority (51.3 percent) of Black households with children under 18 are single-parent households, compared to 32.5% of White, non-Hispanic and 42.4% of Hispanic households. These statistics point to the opportunity of structuring interventions that are geographically focused, including initiatives that are culturally sensitive and focused on appropriate interventions for the observe contexts.

Community policing needs to occur in schools, not just in the community.
 Boynton Beach Stakeholder Discussion Participant

Interventions can also be developed or enhanced for adult offenders. An example of one such program, implemented in Oakland, CA, called Operation Ceasefire, draws on data to identify people who are at the highest risk of shooting someone or being shot themselves. At a meeting with police and community members, known as a call-in, the recruits are told they'll be punished if they keep engaging in violence. But they're also offered access to housing, jobs, medical care, and life coaches, plus a monthly stipend if they accomplish goals like signing up for health insurance, opening a savings account, and staying in touch with probation officers.⁵²

While initially the program focused on putting more police on the streets, the focus shifted in recognition of the fact that many men at the highest risk of this violence—often members of gangs, with a history of shooting or being shot—are also the most isolated from social services, or the most resistant to them. In 2013, at the behest of pastors and other residents, the city rolled out Ceasefire for a third time, but with a twist: The program would scale back its emphasis on law enforcement and focus, through life coaching, on helping participants develop positive relationships with mentors who grew up in similar neighborhoods as they had.

⁵² City of Oakland, CA. Operation Ceasefire. <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/oaklands-ceasefire-strategy>



Recommendations:


Investing in communities caught in cycles of crime, decay, and disinvestment can help reduce crime rates.⁵³ Research on social ties and institutions suggests that strong community organizations and leadership can make a difference. Investments that increase inclusion and support education, skills, and access to jobs may be necessary to address the concentrated disadvantage at the root of violent crime in neighborhoods. Housing programs may avoid reconcentrating poverty in disadvantaged areas and crossing thresholds linked to increases in violent crime. In general, policies that reduce economic, racial, and ethnic segregation can increase communities’ access to key resources to prevent violent crime and promote healthy development.⁵⁴

Strategy: Community-based services as a strategy for improving public safety.

Crime prevention and reduction and community safety are linked to broader issues of community development. Efforts that create decent-paying jobs for the poor, enhance their vocational and educational opportunities, and improve their neighborhood living conditions should all help reduce poverty and its attendant problems and thus to reduce crime; Housing stability is also important. With the understanding of the factors that contribute to crime, channeling public safety funding to community actors outside the traditional justice system can be a viable strategy. Supporting organizations and initiatives that build and reinforce community relationships, increasing

⁵³ Lauren J. Krivo. 2014. “Reducing Crime Through Community Investment: Can We Make It Work?” *Criminology & Public Policy* 13:2, 189–92.

⁵⁴ Chase Sackett. (2016). *Neighborhoods and Violent Crime. Evidence Matters*. Summer 2016. HUD Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R). <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/em/summer16/index.html>



employment, education, and economic opportunity, increasing access to healing and trauma recovery supports, fostering participatory policymaking and political mobilization, sustaining safe and stable housing, are some examples of the application of this strategy.

Strategy: Address behavioral needs of youth before or at first contact with the juvenile justice system and helping them overcome that behavior enhances public safety. Evidence shows that after-school programs reduce crime but programs need to be rooted in a deep understanding of the community and the limitations of programs. Sometimes after-school programs are not feasible for students, for example, if they have to work an after-school job. Transportation might be another obstacle to program participation. The point is that when we examine community needs and gaps of programs we need to do it with an equity lens and understanding the barriers of various groups.

In addition to programs for school-aged children, addressing the risk factors that contribute to crime also required wraparound family support, mental health and substance abuse services outside of school and after school hours.

Strategy: Community engagement in safety and community policing, which denotes the building of relationships between police and the community through consistent presence of recognizable officers and their interaction with the community.

To address some of the challenges and mistrust, police-led community-based approaches for violence reduction include strategies that aim to mobilize communities to participate in the crime control process. Community-oriented policing strategies focus on community involvement in the definition of problems and responses in the community, decentralization of police agencies, and a focus on problem-solving oriented strategies. There is evidence that community-oriented policing has a positive impact on community perceptions of law enforcement and police-community relations. Some example of community-oriented policing include programs that introduce police to school-age children and reduce fear and distrust. Other practices that reduce the risk of misconduct and improve trust include review of officer body camera footage, monitoring and analysis of use of force, and providing training for law enforcement officials that improve their understanding of the communities they serve.



Healthcare Access and Health Outcomes

COVID-19 exacerbated existing health and economic wealth gaps. Local governments and community stakeholders are challenged with identifying revitalization strategies to address barriers to economic mobility with increased attention placed on the intersection of gender, race, health and poverty. The Boynton Beach Equity Initiative's focus on community-based solutions will allow the city to recover from the pandemic and its economic effects, while shifting priorities to place equity front and center in recovery efforts. In this context, it is crucial to recognize the linkages between economic conditions, health and other areas related to community resilience.

Healthcare practitioners concur that nonmedical social needs, or social determinants of health (SDOH), defined by the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) as the conditions under which people are born, grow, live, work, and age, have a large influence on an individual's health outcomes. AAFP acknowledges that "for the medical community to have a significant and lasting impact on the health of their patients and communities, it must address the needs of patients outside the clinic walls".⁵⁵ Factors that strongly influence health outcomes include access to medical care, nutritious foods, clean water, education and health literacy, ethnicity and cultural orientation, gender, housing and transportation, exposure to violence, neighborhood safety and recreational facilities, occupation and job security, socioeconomic status, and spiritual/religious values.

Health outcomes are heavily influenced by socioeconomic factors such as housing security and economic stability, or lack thereof. For example, economic instability can lead an individual to make poor health decisions, such as skipping regular health check-ups or opting out of health insurance coverage, because they need to use the money to pay their rent. Neighborhood-level indicators speak to the different needs of residents from different racial groups and socioeconomic backgrounds. The rate of Black residents without health insurance coverage (30%) is almost double the rate of White, non-Hispanic residents (17 percent). The City's census tracts with the largest number of Black residents, have the lowest overall life expectancy - 77 years, below the 81 years average.⁵⁶ Poverty in these census tracts is almost triple the city's 9.3 percent rate. There are also variations across other metrics influencing health outcomes - education, housing costs and incomes. Geography, race and ethnicity, and various social determinants intersect to influence educational and economic opportunities, health outcomes and other community indicators.

Since health inequities mirror inequities in the material conditions and social and political structures within societies, that is, in the social determinants of health, addressing these inequities in health requires joint action by multiple stakeholders and policies that have an influence on the diverse and often complex decision-making processes within these structures. This section outlines some of the most pressing needs of Boynton Beach residents with an equity lens, which will serve as the foundation for the city and its partners to work collaboratively towards solutions.

Health Insurance

Health insurance is a fundamental safety net that protects individuals and families and ensures better health outcomes. According to the American Health Association, "health insurance facilitates access to care and is associated with lower death rates, better health outcomes, and improved

⁵⁵American Academy of Family Physicians. 2019. "Social Determinants of Health: Guide to Social Needs Screening."

⁵⁶ National Center for Health Statistics, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data-visualization/life-expectancy/> See Census Tracts 57.02 and 61.

productivity.”⁵⁷ Health insurance coverage is also an important financial tool as it can pay for unexpected costs, and provides financial protection against large medical bills.

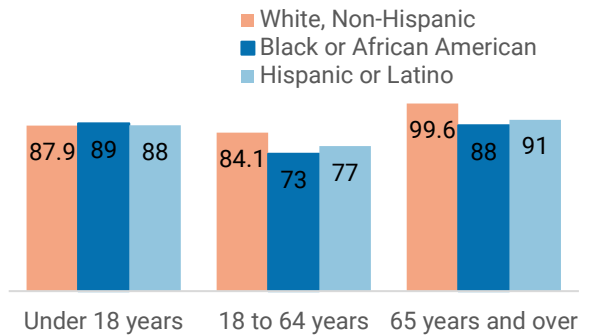
Most Boynton Beach residents are covered by at least one type of health insurance, either employer-based, public, or private. The number of uninsured residents has decreased over the past decade – 84.7 percent of residents had health insurance in 2019, up from 78.2 percent in 2013. Health insurance rates for Black and Hispanic residents are about 9 percentage points lower than that of white residents.

The age group with the most even distribution of health insurance coverage across racial groups is the younger population, aged 18 or younger. These high rates of coverage occur due to parents’ ability to add dependents to healthcare plans or their coverage through Florida KidCare, which includes free, subsidized, and full-pay options based on family income and household size. Higher rates of coverage in the retirement age population, aged 65 or older, can be explained by access to public health insurance through Medicare. However, we begin to see health insurance coverage less evenly distributed across race.

The Black elderly population of Boynton Beach has the lowest rates of coverage in this age group, 88 percent, compared to the 99.6 percent of the White elderly population. The Hispanic population falls in between with 91 percent covered by health insurance. Perhaps the biggest difference in health insurance coverage is observed in the remaining age group, 19-64. 77 percent of Black residents and 73 percent of Hispanic residents are covered by health insurance, compared to 84.1 percent of White residents. The 19-64 age group is also the working-age population and lack of health insurance in this age group is indicative of the lack healthcare benefits through employers, or younger residents opting out of insurance coverage by choice. Research from the economic development equity pillar demonstrates that retail, service, and accommodation and food services are among the top employing industries in Boynton Beach – sectors in which Black and Hispanic residents are heavily concentrated. Workers in these sectors often find themselves without employer-based benefits because employers do not offer them. On the other hand, White, non-Hispanic residents dominate the sales and office occupations and management and business sectors. Industries that require skilled workers offer better employer benefits, including healthcare benefits.

Healthcare affordability is a theme that was brought up during one of the two focus groups held. Residents are aware of the health and economic constraints that come with lack of coverage. During one of our focus groups, a point was made that healthcare would be attainable if more jobs offered benefits and affordable plans. More specifically, 50 percent of participants agreed that healthcare affordability presented the biggest challenge to public health. Healthcare affordability is a broad umbrella, and under it exist high premium costs, cost of care, and medical debt. There is a misconception that people without health insurance are young and healthy and choose to forego health insurance coverage, but that is simply not true⁵⁸. Cost remains the leading reason for high

Percent of Residents with Health Insurance



Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates, 201

⁵⁷ American Hospital Association. The Importance of Health Coverage. <https://www.aha.org/guidesreports/report-importance-health-coverage>

⁵⁸ Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services. https://www.cms.gov/CCIIO/Resources/Files/adult_child_fact_sheet



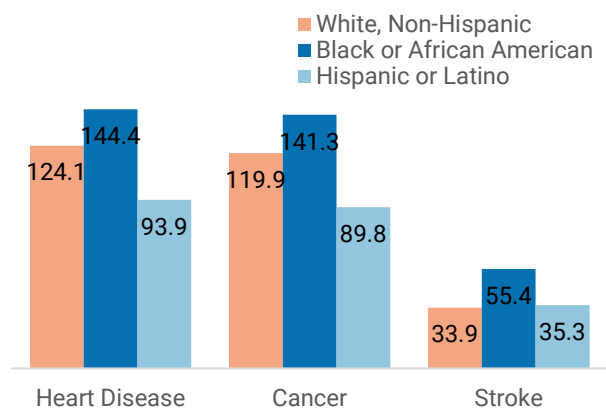
rates of uninsured residents. Lack of health insurance creates a dangerous pattern where uninsured residents are much more likely to forego needed care, receive fewer preventive services, and are less likely to have regular care for chronic conditions.⁵⁹ On that same note, when uninsured individuals need medical care, the cost is much more than they can afford. Alternatives to private health insurance such as Medicare and Medicaid are cumbersome to healthcare billing and processing, and difficult to understand for those applying for it. Another point made regarding healthcare affordability referred to the cost and how people had to consider choosing healthcare or treatment over other expenses. When there are no resources, money, or time, Boynton residents choose to forego health insurance altogether because it becomes a luxury they cannot afford. Finally, special attention should be drawn to healthcare literacy.

Disease Prevalence

When low-income families prioritize other expenses, whether by choice or because of essential needs, such as monthly rent, over a monthly health insurance premium, it means they choose to opt out of preventive services such as routine health screenings and check-ups, where chronic diseases can be detected and eliminated before they become life-threatening conditions. Disparities in healthcare coverage also has negative outcomes in terms of diseases occurrence and death.

While data for cities and neighborhoods is not available, county-wide statistics provide insight into some of the health-related challenges of Boynton Beach residents from diverse groups. Over the last decade, the leading causes of death in Palm Beach have remained the same. Heart disease, cancer, and stroke have disproportionately and consistently affected Black residents more than any other racial and ethnic group.⁶⁰ As a community, African Americans have higher rates of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, and diabetes, which are four major risk factors for heart disease.⁶¹ Moreover, the risk of these diseases can be greatly reduced by a combination of affordable and accessible preventive services and making healthier lifestyle choices. Heart disease and stroke are two diseases that can be prevented or delayed through health-promoting behaviors, such as physical activity and a healthy diet. Cancers can be managed through screening, early detection, and overall access to quality healthcare. Over time, having a regular source of care and health education can eliminate the occurrences of deadly diseases.

2019 Palm Beach Leading Causes of Death, Age-Adjusted Death Rate per 100,000



Source: Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics


Obesity-related conditions include heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancers⁶² – an alarming fact since these conditions are all leading causes of death in black residents in Palm Beach. Additionally, lack of resources, as well as lack of knowledge about healthy foods,

⁵⁹ Tolbert, J., Orgera, K., & Damico, A. *Key Facts About the Uninsured Population*. Kaiser Family Foundation. <https://www.kff.org/uninsured/issue-brief/key-facts-about-the-uninsured-population/>

⁶⁰ Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistic. <https://www.flhealthcharts.org>

⁶¹ Der Ananian, C., Winham, D. M., Thompson, S. V., & Tissue, M. E. (2018). Perceptions of Heart-Healthy Behaviors among African American Adults: A Mixed Methods Study. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 15(11), 2433. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15112433>

⁶² Center for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html>



contribute to obesity-related diseases in low-income areas. Left unmanaged, chronic disease can lead to expensive and disabling health complications.

Cost is a leading factor for high rates of uninsured residents, but it is important to note that regardless of coverage, Black and Hispanic residents typically do not trust physicians.⁶³ This can be attributed to lack of representation in the medical field, so patients do not feel comfortable that doctors of other races understand their needs as well as a doctor of their same race would. Lack of representation leads to cultural barriers between patients and physicians.

On the other hand, minority patients report instances where they are treated differently, more formally acknowledged as implicit biases from healthcare providers.⁶⁴ To better explain, the term “implicit bias” refers to the unconscious attitudes we have towards people, or the stereotypes associated with people. These unconscious thoughts and perceptions in favor of or against certain groups of people can lead medical professionals to draw certain conclusions without being consciously aware of it. For example, in 2019, an article published in the AHA/ASA Journals found that in one Boston hospital, Black and Hispanic patients arriving to the emergency room experiencing cardiac symptoms were less likely than white patients with the same symptoms and medical history to be admitted to the cardiology unit.⁶⁵ When this implicit bias is experienced time and time again, it generates long-term mistrust between physicians and patients and creates a harmful dynamic that manifests itself in poor health outcomes for minorities, especially for black residents. When we take a step back and look at the larger picture, we see how external factors and socioeconomic factors play a direct role in health outcomes for distressed populations.

Disease Prevention

Cost-burdened renters are concentrated in the Heart of Boynton area – an area that can be described as a “food desert”, in which people have limited access to a variety of healthy and affordable food.⁶⁶ One topic that community members addressed was access to healthy foods. From our research in Boynton’s demographics, we know that the low-income areas are inhabited by primarily Black and Hispanic populations, and these low-income areas lack healthy food options.

According to the USDA Food Access Atlas, Boynton Beach has three census tracts (displayed in the map to the right), including the Heart of Boynton area, which are considered low access tracts.⁶⁷ Data takes into account availability of transportation, economic factors, SNAP recipient numbers, and supermarket locations in that class. In urban areas such as Boynton Beach, supermarkets are considered accessible if they are within a one-mile radius. Research has shown that residents in low

⁶³ Berger, M. W. *Penn Postdoctoral Research fellow: Minorities less likely to trust physicians*. Penn Today. <https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/minorities-less-likely-trust-physicians-says-penn-research>

⁶⁴ FitzGerald, C., & Hurst, S. (2017). Implicit bias in healthcare professionals: a systematic review. *BMC medical ethics*, 18(1), 19. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12910-017-0179-8>

⁶⁵ Lauren A. Eberly et al. (2019). Identification of Racial Inequities in Access to Specialized Inpatient Heart Failure Care at an Academic Medical Center. *Circulation: Heart Failure*. <https://doi.org/10.1161/CIRCHEARTFAILURE.119.006214>

⁶⁶ Dutko, Paula, Michele Ver Ploeg, and Tracey Farrigan. Characteristics and Influential Factors of Food Deserts, ERR-140, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, August 2012.

⁶⁷ Economic Research Service (ERS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Food Access Research Atlas. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/>

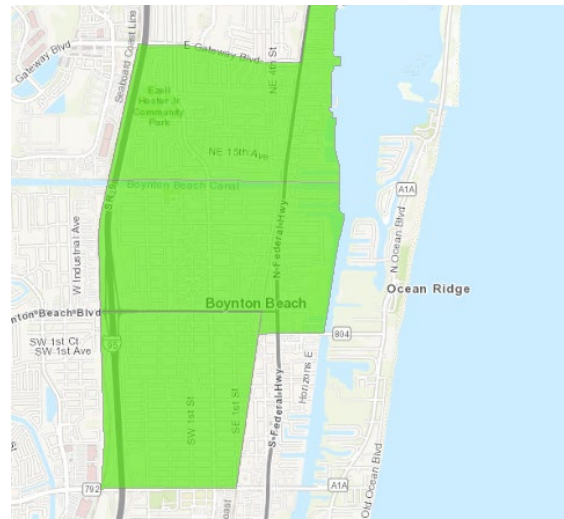
access areas are 25-46 percent less likely to have a healthy diet than those with a supermarket within a one-mile radius of their home. That means that when financial resources are strained, individuals and families resort to cheap, processed, unhealthy foods.

Childhood experiences affect family health in adulthood in the expected direction. Even in the presence of early adversity, positive experiences in childhood can provide a foundation for creating better family health in adulthood.⁶⁸ Establishing healthy habits from an early age creates a strong foundation to continue those patterns later on in life. Community members and community leaders highlighted the need to approach health in a holistic manner, shifting the mindset from healthcare to wellness, especially at a young age. Through healthy foods comes understanding, and this understanding will encourage and influence healthy habits in children. Non-profits and organizations such as Feeding South Florida are in an elevated position to create partnerships with corporations and other non-profits to provide affordable and healthy foods to vulnerable residents and wrap-around services.

The current 2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that people needing 2,000 calories per day include 2 cups of fruit and 2.5 cups of vegetables in their daily diets. USDA food consumption surveys find that the average American falls far short—consuming only 0.9 cups of fruit and 1.4 cups of vegetables per day.⁶⁹ In 2019, in Palm Beach County, 45.9% of adults consumed two or more servings of vegetables per day.⁷⁰ Most Palm Beach residents do not meet the recommended servings. However, providing fresh fruits and vegetables to distressed communities is not enough. A culturally sensitive approach is needed for early intervention, so children have context and understanding of the importance of health and wellness. The idea is that over time, incorporating culturally sensitive foods, attitudes, and values into health education programming will reduce overall healthcare disparities. This is a perfect example of one of the ways we can create the bridge to shift attitudes from healthcare to wellness and communities will learn to correct behaviors to prevent lifelong chronic diseases.

According to the World Health Organization, health is defined as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”⁷¹ When communities are aware of the impact their lifestyle choices have on their health and when they are equipped with access to the right resources, they thrive. Learning healthy habits early in life creates a pattern of long-term wellness and through wellness, chronic and deadly diseases can be managed. This is especially important for minorities, who are greatly impacted by heart disease, cancer, and strokes.

Low-income census tracts with a significant share of residents is more than 1 mile from the nearest supermarket.



⁶⁸ Daines, C.L., Hansen, D., Novilla, M.L.B. et al. Effects of positive and negative childhood experiences on adult family health. *BMC Public Health* 21, 651 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-10732-w>

⁶⁹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. 8th Edition. December 2015. Available at <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/>.

⁷⁰ Florida Charts. Florida Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System telephone survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Florida Department of Health Division of Community Health Promotion. <https://www.flhealthcharts.gov/>

⁷¹ World Health Organization, Constitution of the World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/about/governance/constitution>

Maternal Health

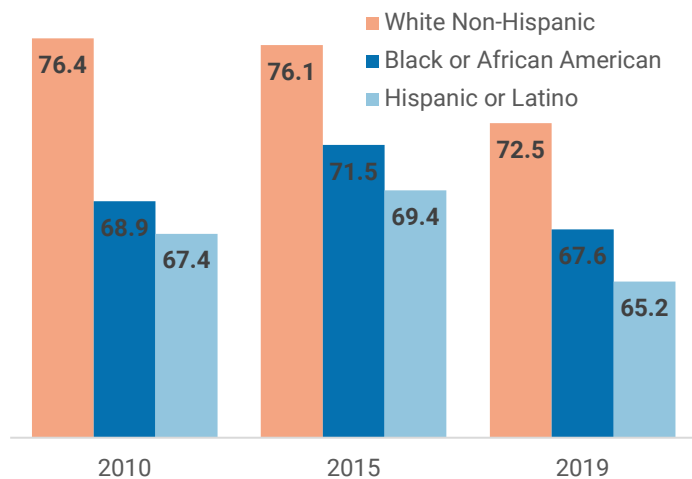
A growing area of concern is maternal health, as a mother's choices during pregnancy can greatly influence the health of her baby and create a pattern for lifelong health. In Palm Beach County, White Non-Hispanic mothers are more likely to give birth with adequate prenatal care, meaning they met 80-100% of their expected healthcare visits. Hispanic mothers consistently have the lowest rates of adequate prenatal care, 65.2 percent, followed by Black mothers, 67.5 percent.

Inadequate prenatal care and health outcomes can be explained by a number of factors, including lack of health insurance, low income, housing instability, and poor housing conditions. In the analysis of economic data, we found that Black and Hispanic Boynton residents earn significantly less than White Boynton residents and are heavily concentrated in occupational sectors that typically do not offer healthcare benefits. Furthermore, the health insurance coverage data shows that minorities, specifically Black and Hispanic residents, are less likely to have health insurance or seek healthcare in general. In relation to housing, White, Non-Hispanic households in Boynton Beach have a much higher rate of homeownership than Black and Hispanic residents. Black resident households are the only group to currently have a higher proportion of renters than homeowners. These issues are relevant to families and expecting mothers who worry about basic living expenses like rent, transportation, and utilities rather their next check-up. Mothers who receive inadequate prenatal care are more likely to birth babies with a low birth weight and are more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications.⁷²

Mothers who receive adequate prenatal care give birth to babies within a healthy weight range. Birthweights are a strong indicator of an infant's health and survival. Low birthweight can cause serious health problems for some babies and can lead to serious health conditions later in life, such as diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure.⁷³ Over the past decade, Black mothers consistently have the highest rates of live births under 2500 grams, followed by Hispanic mothers. In 2019, the rate of low birthweights for Black mothers, 13.9 percent, more than doubled that of Hispanic mothers, 6.9 percent, and White, Non-Hispanic mothers, 6.7 percent.

A contributing factor to low birth weights is the age in which women become pregnant. Babies born to teen mothers, women between the ages of 15-19, may be at a greater risk for pre-term delivery and low birth weight. It is important to note that teens are less likely to seek prenatal care, which often leads to long-term developmental problems for the baby. Black and Hispanic mothers do not receive proper prenatal care, and teen pregnancies may be contributing to those rates. In Palm Beach County, births to mothers between 15-19 years of age have steadily decreased. Black (19.8 per 1,000 females) and Hispanic (27.8 per


Rate of Births with Adequate Prenatal Care by Race and Ethnicity, Palm Beach County



Source: Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics

⁷² Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistic. <https://www.flhealthcharts.org>

⁷³ March of Dimes. <https://www.marchofdimes.org/complications/low-birthweight.aspx>



1,000 females) teens continue to lead in teen pregnancy, almost double the rates of teen pregnancies in White, Non-Hispanic (13.5 per 1,000 females) mothers. Socioeconomic factors, such as low family income levels and low levels of educational attainment, contribute to higher rates of teen pregnancies. These socioeconomic factors are generally linked to Black and Hispanic communities. Early pregnancy can have deleterious effects later in life in terms. Teens who become pregnant are more likely to drop out of school and be unemployed, which diminishes their economic mobility prospects. An early and unplanned pregnancy could be “an off-ramp from upward mobility”.⁷⁴

We can tie adequate prenatal care, healthy birthweight, and the age which a mother gives birth to infant mortality rates. Infant mortality rates reflect the quality of health care available to expecting mothers as well as the health and overall well-being of the community. The disparity in infant mortality in Palm Beach County is most apparent between Black mothers (7.8 per 1,000 births) and White mothers (3.2 percent per 1,000 births)⁷⁵. Although infant mortality has generally decreased over the past decade, Black mothers continue to have double the rate of infant mortality.

So, whether an expecting mother receives adequate prenatal care for their child becomes a byproduct of having a steady stream of income, housing stability, proper nutrition, and proper living conditions. When these basic needs are met before and after children are born, diseases can be managed. Proper care is crucial to develop the next generation of Boynton residents.

Mental Health

An issue that resurfaced often during health discussions was mental health and the need for expanded access to mental health services. In addition to physical health outcomes, we must consider access to mental health and mental health outcomes, which are important factors that determine quality of life. Stressors such as job loss and unemployment, financial instability, and traumatic life events have a direct impact on mental health. For example, in relation to income, Palm Beach residents who make \$25,000 or less annually are more likely to be diagnosed with a depressive disorder.⁷⁶ Fortunately, there is heightened awareness of the need for mental health needs and services, but the question remains – how can we bridge the gap between medical health and mental health?


In Palm Beach, from 2016 to 2019, the number of mental health professionals increased by 12 percent yet services remain inaccessible to low-income residents and those without health insurance. Additionally, the negative stigma tied to seeking mental health is one of the leading risk factors to poor mental health outcomes. Reducing the stigma is especially important for males, whose suicide rates nearly triple that of women, and minorities, who experience poorer mental health outcomes. Although women are more likely to suffer from depression and more likely to attempt suicide, the male suicidal rate is much higher than that of women. Suicide rates for men nearly triple that of women, from 6.8 per 100,000 in women to 21.5 per 100,000 in men in 2019.⁷⁷ Over the last decade, this trend has remained mostly the same. Perhaps one of the clearest risk factors is communication, or lack thereof. Men are constantly encouraged to remain “strong”, to repress any

⁷⁴ Petrelli, Michael. (2015) Early and unplanned pregnancy: An off-ramp from upward mobility. Thomas Fordham Institute. <https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/commentary/early-and-unplanned-pregnancy-ramp-upward-mobility>

⁷⁵ Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistic. <https://www.flhealthcharts.org>

⁷⁶ Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistic. <https://www.flhealthcharts.org>

⁷⁷ Ibid.



feelings of weakness, and to push through tough times. It turns into a larger problem when men refuse to seek help and decide to “self-medicate” by turning to substance and alcohol abuse.

During one of our focus groups, 50 percent of participants agreed that mental health was the biggest challenge to public health. Some participants made comments about the abundance of mental health services available in schools. Additionally, we should note that mental health is especially important in the LGBTQ+ population, yet there is limited data on the specific needs of this community.

More recently, in the wake of the pandemic, people have become more isolated and may experience more feelings of distress and loneliness. Job loss and housing instability are risk factors for poor mental health outcomes and the pandemic fueled this existing problem.

Recommendations:

The city and community organizations can advocate with employers to offer healthcare benefits and affordable plans, as well as workforce upskilling to match skills demand for higher wage positions. Increasing access to wrap-around services and food security, in conjunction with increasing awareness of racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare, can have a profound, long-lasting impact in underserved communities. Raising awareness of the importance of mental health will normalize the topic of seeking mental help and help to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health struggles.

Florida is one of the 12 states that has a Medicaid coverage gap because the state has rejected federal funding to expand Medicaid. As a result, households with income below the poverty level are not automatically eligible for Medicaid. To counteract this fact, employers could offer healthcare benefits along with affordable plans. Additionally, increasing awareness of options available in the health insurance marketplace can help reduce the lack of coverage in low-income households.

Health and wellness can be improved through a culturally sensitive approach. Through wrap-around services and early intervention, children will understand the importance of health and wellness. Place-making through community and urban gardens will not only create a safe space for community members of all ages to share experiences, but it will reinforce healthy habits learned in school and practiced at-home. Support for local and regional organizations such as Feeding South Florida that provide affordable and healthy foods, and other organizations that provide education to vulnerable residents will encourage and influence healthy habits.

Finally, in the effort to improve overall well-being, the community needs to also recognize and incorporate mental health as an important tenet. Access to mental health and mental health outcomes are important factors that determine quality of life. Economic instability and other stressors have a direct impact on mental health. Reducing the stigma is especially important for males, whose suicide rates nearly triple that of women, and minorities, who experience poorer mental health outcomes. The city can support and partner with local organizations and community leaders who are working in this space to augment their efforts.

Appendix

Focus Group Details

Introduction:

On September 18 and September 22, 2021, the research team facilitated two focus groups with Boynton Beach residents. The discussion was designed to gather information from residents on the city's current challenges and possible solutions across the five equity pillars: economic development, education, housing public health, and criminal justice and safety. In conjunction with administrative data presented in the CAN, the resident feedback was used to paint a more complete picture of resident experiences, and develop findings and recommended action items.

Demographics:


A total of 11 community members participated in the two focus groups. Participants have lived in Boynton for more than 10 years, and some up have been lifelong residents.

	Occupation	Length of time in city
Participant 1	Healthcare worker	20+ years
Participant 2	Recruiter	<i>undisclosed</i>
Participant 3	Retired	15+ years
Participant 4	Retired	21 years
Participant 5	Educator	10+ years
Participant 6	County government worker	20 years
Participant 7	Community advocate	10+ years
Participant 8	Nurse	40+ years
Participant 9	Community advocate	Lifelong resident
Participant 10	Social care worker	10+ years
Participant 11	Episcopal priest	10 years

Methodology:

To allow for participants of diverse professional backgrounds to participate, the focus groups occurred outside regular business hours, from 6:30 pm – 8:00pm and on a Saturday morning, from 11:00 am – 1:00 pm. To recruit volunteers for the focus group, the City of Boynton Beach reached out to their stakeholders across different focus areas – economic development, housing, education, criminal justice, and health – and asked them to identify community leaders and residents who are familiar with the city. Research staff reached out to all potential participants through a combination of phone calls and emails. An electronic flyer was created and distributed via email to all potential participants.

Participation in the focus groups was voluntary and participants were advised at the beginning of each session that their responses would remain anonymous. Deception was not used at any point and the moderators disclosed the purpose of the focus group and how the information the participants provided would be used. The sessions were not recorded to ensure participants spoke freely. Instead, Metro Center staff took detailed notes which were later compiled and transcribed for analysis.



19 Boynton Beach community members in total registered online to attend the focus groups scheduled for September 18th and September 22nd via Zoom. Of the 19 confirmed, six participated in the September 18th Zoom focus group and five participated in the September 22nd Zoom focus group.

The research team drafted a focus group script to help guide and moderate the conversation. The staff that facilitated the focus group is fluent in English and Spanish, but there was no request to interpret any questions since all participants were fluent English speakers. The script began by explaining the purpose of the focus group, followed by warm-up questions regarding participants' thoughts about the community they currently live in. Following the warm-up, the script was divided by the five designated equity pillars – education, public health, criminal justice and safety, economic development, and housing. Within these sections, participants were asked about the biggest challenge to each topic, what obstacles they face to access resources within the topic, and what can be done to improve their concerns. These questions were presented via Zoom Polls and participants responded to the poll anonymously. Once the poll closed and everyone casted their vote, the results were visible to everyone and tallied through percentages. Throughout the focus group, participants were encouraged to share any idea that may not have been addressed and to share their honest thoughts. Towards the end of the discussion, the script prompted participants for suggestions on data, metrics, or issues that should be included in the final report and have not yet been covered.

Discussion Themes:

The discussion in both focus groups began by everyone introducing themselves, stating their names, occupations, and length of time they have lived in Boynton Beach. After introductions, the warm-up questions asked participants about their perceptions of their community, why they decided to move or stay in Boynton Beach, and if they were satisfied with the community they live in.

High costs of housing and renting

Both focus groups overwhelmingly agreed that the cost of renting and owning and housing availability pose the biggest challenges to housing in Boynton Beach. Some participants asserted that new housing developments are not reflective of the city and claimed that the architecture and design of new development caters to people from out of state looking to move to Boynton Beach. Residents have expressed the desire to become homeowners but the cost is too high and ultimately cannot afford to do so. They noted the high cost of living in Boynton Beach that does not align with the wages offered. People are finding that one job is not enough to keep them afloat and if they want to buy a decent home, they must have two incomes. Participants expressed that the market has become a seller's market, meaning that demand exceeds supply, so there are far too many buyers, but real estate inventory is low. Additionally, participants pointed out a need to invest in older Boynton homes that no longer serve as a safe and habitable home. They noted the presence of older homes in the city that need home restoration and alluded to incomplete housing projects or abandoned lots.

With regard to housing availability, one participant mentioned that the available establishments are “far and few”, and that any available houses for sale at a decent price are located out west, far from businesses and grocery stores in unincorporated parts west of the city. In one of our focus groups, participants were skeptical of the City's intentions regarding housing availability. For example, when talking about new subdivisions developed by the Boynton Beach CRA on Seacrest Boulevard, one participant claimed there was a “deliberate exclusion” of certain communities by denying long-time residents fair access to apply for housing due to improper dissemination of minimum qualifications.

Barriers to Economic Mobility

When talking about economic development, 67% of participants in one focus group noted that a combination of job availability, education, professional training, and wages all present challenges to furthering the community's economic mobility. More specifically, participants expressed a lack of opportunity for black residents and vulnerable populations, such as citizens in retirement age. Again, participants noted exclusion from certain job opportunities often due to language requirements from employers. An interesting point one participant made was that the City of Boynton Beach is the largest employer in the city, yet the majority of people of color are in low-income jobs, such as beach keepers and landscapers. People of color are seldom in areas where big-wage earners are included. Participants agreed that the city needs to be equitable about employers in the city and who they employ.

Lack of Community Interest and Involvement

After explaining the purpose of the focus group going through the warm-up questions, one participant mentioned a sense of disinterest from the community. She explained that the community expresses many complaints but they do not take the time to get involved and engaged in community discussions. She explained that this in itself is a big factor that could change the course of future community-based programming. Another participant addressed the topic of community involvement, and explained that the changes Boynton Beach has experienced have not been community-oriented or community-led. She explained that there is no knowledge as to when or why changes are made, and residents in her area find out about these changes after they have been decided they will be made, and not during the decision-making process. By the time the changes reach the community, it's too late and they are unable to provide their feedback.


"Residents do not have a share at the table".

Distrust in Local Government and General Equity Concerns

Both focus groups expressed a feeling of distrust in the intentions of local government and the plans they are developing for an equitable Boynton Beach. When speaking about affordable housing, one participant claimed that the city used the term as a smoke screen. Additionally, she was skeptical of the intentions of the CRA in holding public meetings, where the purpose is to gather the thoughts and opinions of community members, but questioned whether the feedback be incorporated into future programming and planning. She claimed the public meetings are smoke screens so the CRA can claim that the community was involved but ultimately chooses to proceed with their desired plans. She also questioned if local government entities were simply filling the need to include the public in order to secure federal funding. Another participant expressed that the City did not want to admit that there are areas that need drastic help; instead, they are looking for ways to get rid of those to people to make the city look "nice and attractive for others to come to live".

Challenges for Boynton Beach Youths due to Lack of Alternative and Technical Programming

The majority of participants identified that awareness of prospective career paths, or lack thereof, posed the biggest challenge to education in Boynton Beach. Since technical programs and economic mobility are closely related, a lack of awareness creates a challenge that affects other aspects of life. Participants agreed that the Boynton Beach school system has stopped offering technical programs in schools and instead emphasize that students should pursue a four-year college degree. One participant brought up the need for the City and school system to consider their students' needs and evaluate if promoting a four-year degree is the best option for them. The participant cited William



H. Turner Technical Arts High School in Miami, FL, which is separated into eight career academies, each offering different technical courses and their respective certifications. Another participant agreed and mentioned that programs offered at South Tech Preparatory Academy should be available in all schools. “Students are not aware of the fact that there are companies that don’t require degrees that pay well and provide trainings for a new trade,” one participant noted.

Conclusions, findings, and recommendations

Many participants were skeptical about the outcome of the Community Needs Assessment and questioned if the focus group discussion would generate the outcomes they wished to see in their communities. From the discussion, the following recommendations emerged:

Decision-making with input from the community is crucial to developing a more equitable city

Policy and programming effectiveness with input from the community will allow different opportunities to reach different communities in the city. The feedback from focus group participants tells us that they feel policies are happening “to” them and not “for” them or “with” them and their feedback. In other words, participants expressed a desire to be involved in the decision-making process instead of being excluded. The City of Boynton Beach should build relationships with community-based organizations and community leaders to establish rapport and credibility within the community. The relationship will allow community members to identify pressing needs as they emerge or become more pressing, and the City will be able to react in a timely and appropriate manner.

Balancing job opportunities to create a more diverse and representative workforce

Diversity and inclusion efforts will make way for long-lasting change in terms of upwards mobility. Some participants expressed that lack of education is not the problem, but lack of awareness and then job opportunities. Expanding job opportunities to Black and Hispanic residents will stimulate economic growth within these communities and in the long term, it will create a diverse workforce representative of the City.

Availability of Youth Empowerment Centers for young Boynton residents

Participants from the focus groups, as well as leaders from the stakeholder committees, expressed a desire to have such a place established in the City. A center with targeted youth programming will provide young Boynton residents with a place where they can learn new skills, nurture their health, create relationships with other Boynton residents, and ultimately become future leaders in their communities. It will also make delivery of comprehensive services easier for providers.

Availability of technical programs to create better job opportunities for young Boynton residents

Technical programs are geared towards helping students explore potential career paths yet participants noted a lack of programming throughout the City. Not all students are prepared for college after high school, but students are not made aware of any alternatives. Providing technical programs and improving student awareness and access to them will open new possibilities for young Boynton Beach residents as well as diversity job availability.



Focus Group Script

Introduction:

Hello and thank you to everyone for taking time to participate today. The purpose of this gathering is to discuss and learn about Boynton Beach's current challenges and solutions from you, the community.

Before we get started, I want to mention a few things about our discussion.

I am an independent researcher from Florida International University – I'm here to listen to you and encourage conversation. I have no stake in the opinions you share. Please feel free to be open and honest with your answers.

Your thoughts and opinions are very important to us, there are no right or wrong answers, and your individual responses won't be shared outside of the research team.

Before we jump in, let's go over some guidelines for the discussion:

Your participation is voluntary, and you don't have to answer every question.

That said, you are here because your opinions are very important, and I do hope to hear from everyone at some point. Anything that you share will be kept among the research team, and you will not be personally identified in any reports we prepare based on our conversation. We also ask that we respect each other's privacy, and that you don't share what is discussed with others outside the group.

We will be taking notes on the things you share today, but they will be anonymous and will only serve as a reference as we write our report on the needs of the community.

There are no right or wrong answers, just different opinions. Everyone's opinions and experiences are important. If you disagree with something that is shared, please speak up, because you may represent a lot of people. Similarly, if you agree with something that is said, I'd like to hear that too.

We have 90 minutes together today. Please take the time now to turn off your cell phone or switch it to silent mode.

Any questions?

Let's begin by introducing ourselves to each other. Please tell us: (1) your first name, (2) how long you have lived in this area, and (3) what you do for a living (their occupation). I'll go first

(Let participants answer questions).

Very glad to meet everyone. Let's start our discussion.

Discussion:

I'd like to start by talking about the community. There are many things we think of when talking about Boynton Beach and I'd like to explore those thoughts with you.

- What comes to mind when you think about Boynton Beach?
- Are you satisfied with the community you live in?
- Why did you decide to move to Boynton Beach? Why did you decide to stay in Boynton Beach?

Thank you everyone for your responses. This is helpful to understand how you perceive your community. Later on, I may ask you to specify or elaborate on certain topics.



Economic Development:

Now, I'd like to switch topics and learn from you regarding economic development. This could mean job training programs, small business development, and household income, to name a few. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. If you have comments, feel free to speak up.

First, let's brainstorm together.

What are some thoughts or feelings that come to mind when talking about economic development?

(Note participants' responses)

To be sure we're all thinking about the same thing, economic development refers to investing in the community to grow the economy and enhancing prosperity and quality of life for all residents.

(Note participants' responses)

Now, on your screen you should see a question. You can answer by choosing one of the options. The question asks what you think is the biggest challenge to economic opportunity, and the options are

- Job availability
- Education
- Professional training
- Wages
- Something else

I see most of you chose (x answer with most votes). Those of you who chose (x answer), could you tell me more about how this is a challenge for you?

(Discussion – probe for ED concerns)

Thanks for sharing. Is there anyone that thinks the biggest challenge to economic development is something else? *(Wait for answer – if so, ask follow up)* Could you tell me a little bit more about that? What are the obstacles you face, if any, to accessing resources?

- What can be done to improve these concerns?

Okay, thank you everyone for your input.

Housing:

Next, I'd like to talk about housing. When I say housing, I'm referring to living accommodations, either through renting or through homeownership. I'm interested in hearing your opinions about where you live and obstacles you currently face.

Again, on your screen you'll see a question that you can answer by choosing one of the options. The questions asks what you think is the biggest challenge to housing, and the options are:

- Housing availability
- Cost of renting/owning
- Structure conditions
- Location

I see most of you chose (x answer with most votes). Those of you who chose (x answer), could you tell me more about how this is a challenge for you?

(Discussion – probe for housing concerns)

Thanks for sharing. Would anyone who chose a different answer like to share their thoughts?

- Is anyone facing other challenges? (*Wait for answer – if so, follow up*). Tell me more. Why is that a challenge for you?
- What are the obstacles you face, if any, to accessing resources?
- What can be done to improve these concerns?

Thanks to everyone who has shared so far.

Criminal Justice and Safety:

Moving along – I'd like to switch topics now and talk about criminal justice and safety. I'd like better to understand how you perceive your current public safety systems. This means the ways your community leaders protect residents from crimes, disasters, and other potential dangers and threats. Remember that I'm not looking for any particular answers to my questions. Feel free to be open and share your thoughts.

Now you should see the poll question on your screen that asks what you think is the biggest challenge to criminal justice and safety, and the options are:

- Rising crime rates
- Neighborhood safety and walkability
- Juvenile crime and detentions
- Policing
- Something else

So, the option that received the most votes is (option x). Anyone want to share why they think this is a big challenge?

(Discussion - ask follow-up questions to uncover concerns)

Great – that's very helpful. Does anyone feel there is there anything we haven't discussed or mentioned? Would anyone who chose a different answer like to share their thoughts?

- Is anyone facing other challenges? (*Wait for answer – if so, follow up*). Tell me more. Why is that a challenge for you?
- What are the obstacles you face, if any, to accessing resources?
- What can be done to improve these concerns?


Great, thanks for sharing your thoughts

Public Health:

Now, I want us to talk a bit about public health. Public health means more than when, for example, doctors treat sick patients. Public health is about protecting the safety and improving the overall health of communities. It covers topics such as healthcare education and awareness, disease prevention, and equal and fair access to quality care.

This time, the poll on your screen will ask for your opinion on what you think is the biggest challenge to public health. The options are:

- Chronic diseases in the community
- Mental health services
- Healthcare affordability
- Preventive services
- Something else



I see many of you feel that (most selected option) is the biggest challenge. Can someone tell me more about this option? Why do you feel (x option) is the biggest obstacle?

(Discussion – listen for community issues)

Great – that's very helpful. Does anyone feel there is there anything we haven't discussed or mentioned? Would anyone who chose a different answer like to share their thoughts?

- Is anyone facing other challenges? (*Wait for answer – if so, follow up*). Tell me more. Why is that a challenge for you?
- What are the obstacles you face, if any, to accessing resources?
- What can be done to improve these concerns?

Education:

I've learned a lot from everyone regarding your community, your concerns, and your ideas for long-term improvement.

I'd like to touch on one final topic – education. This means knowledge and skills learned through schooling or instruction. It can be formal, through schools and degrees, or non-formal, such as adult literacy education.

One more time you'll see on your screen a question which asks what you think are the biggest challenges to education. The options are:

- Emphasis on standardized testing
- Quality of k-12 education
- access to quality adult education
- Awareness of prospective career paths
- Something else

Many of you feel (x option) is the biggest challenge to education. Those of you who chose (x answer), could you tell me more about how this is a challenge for you?

(Discussion – listen and probe for concerns)

Great – thank you for sharing. Is there anyone that thinks there is a challenge we haven't discussed? (*Wait for answer – if so, ask follow up*) Could you tell me a little bit more about that? What are the obstacles you face, if any, to accessing resources?

- What can be done to improve these concerns?

Conclusion:

Thank you for sharing your thoughts today. As we conclude our discussion, I have a few final wrap-up questions

- After our discussion, are there any issues we did not cover?
- What other data or metrics should be included in this study?

Okay, thank you so much. I've enjoyed meeting you all. Is there anything else that you would like to share? Are there any final questions? If not, thank you for your time and have a lovely evening.

Focus Group Flyer



Jorge M. Pérez
Metropolitan Center



BOYNTON BEACH COMMUNITY NEEDS DISCUSSION



Saturday, September 18

11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

To register, visit

<https://go.fiu.edu/BoyntonBeach918>

Wednesday, September 22

6:30 PM - 8:00 PM

To register, visit

<https://go.fiu.edu/BoyntonBeach922>

The City of Boynton Beach, in collaboration with the FIU Metropolitan Center, has launched the Boynton Beach Equity Initiative, which will develop findings and recommended action/policy items in five interconnected equity pillars:

- o Economic Development
- o Education
- o Housing
- o Criminal Justice and Safety
- o Public Health

We believe authentic community engagement is the heart of equity-focused policy.

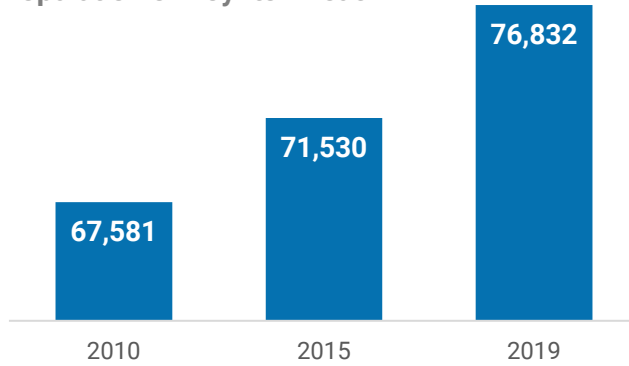
Please join us to discuss the community's current challenges and solutions to them with an equity lens.

**For more information, contact 954-438-8656
or LJarquin@fiu.edu**

Detailed Data Figures

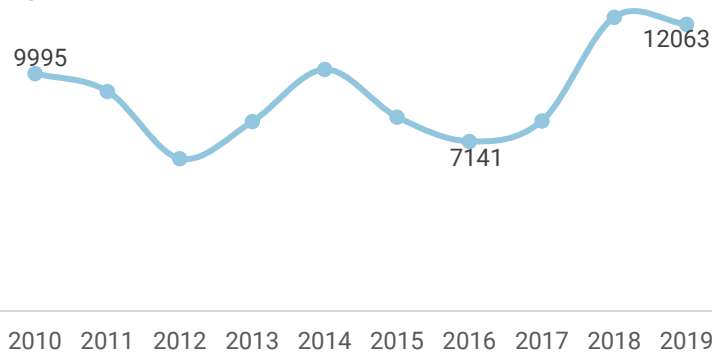
Demographics and Background Information

Population of Boynton Beach



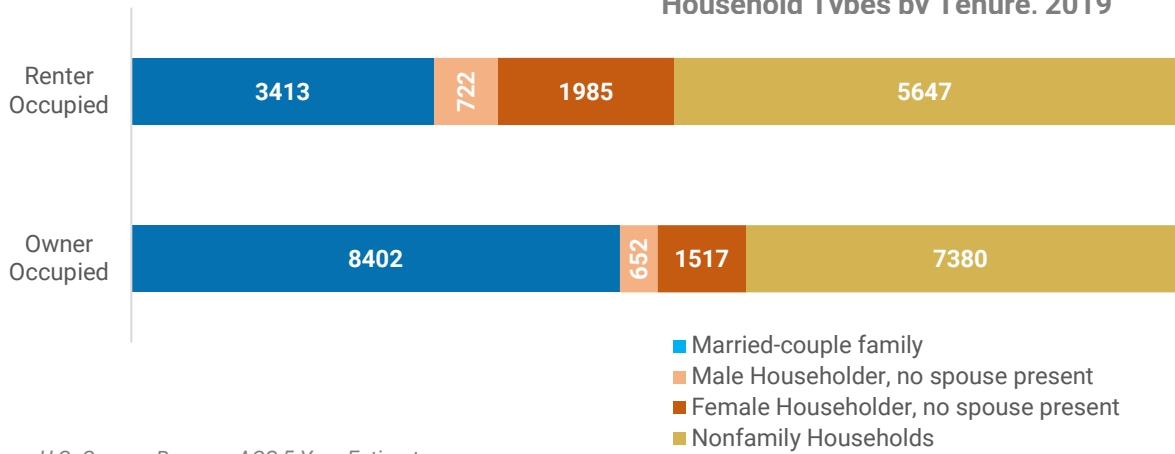
Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates

Boynton Beach, Non Citizen Population



Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 1-Year Estimates

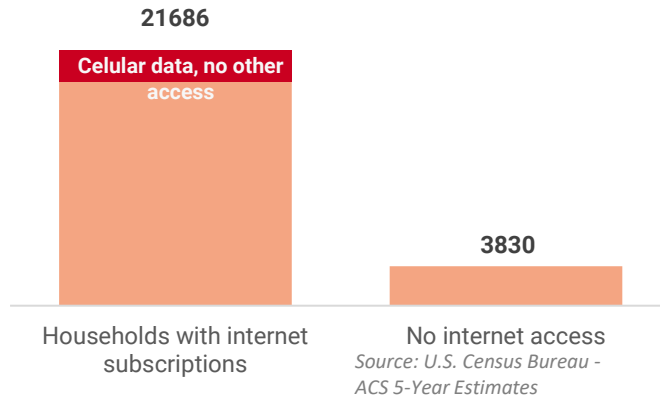
Household Types by Tenure. 2019



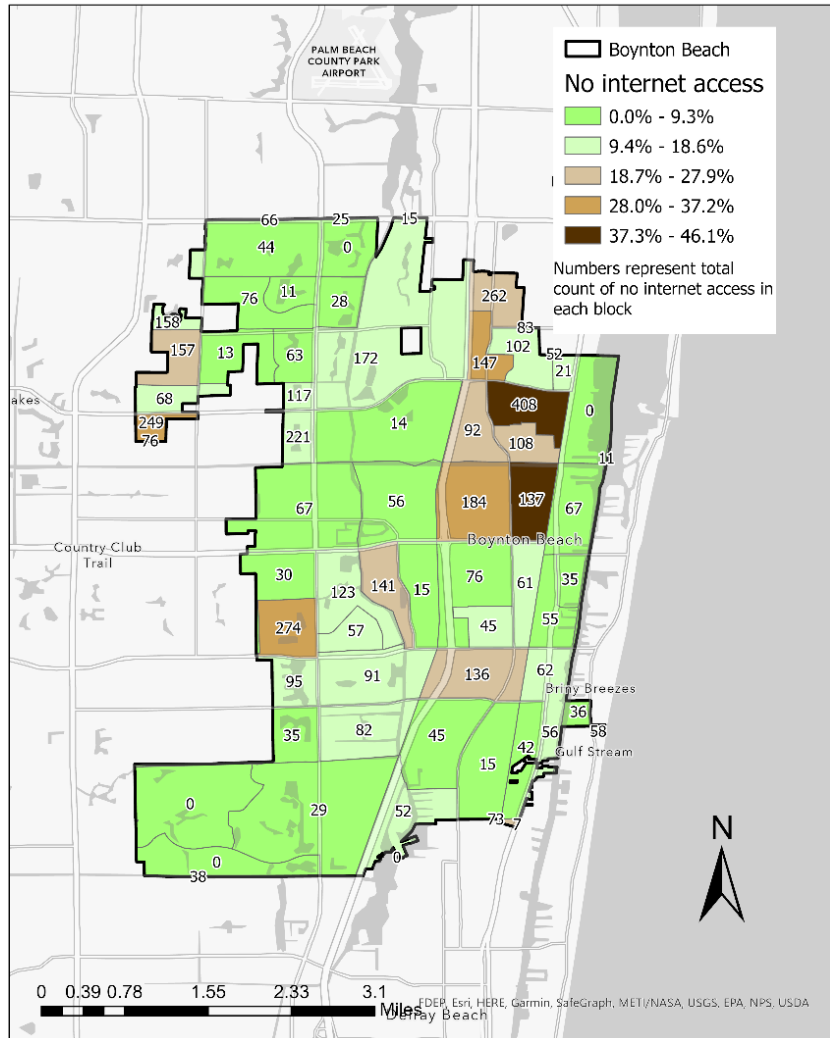
Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates



Households with Access to Broadband Internet



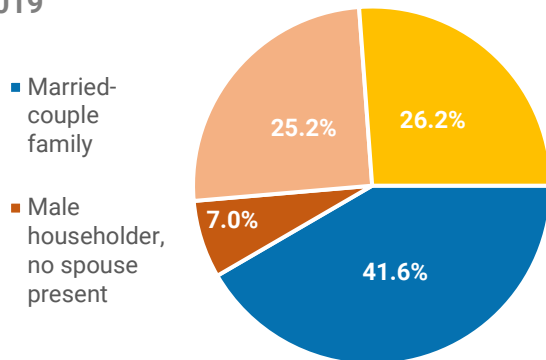
NO INTERNET ACCESS IN BOYNTON BY BLOCK GROUP CONCENTRATION AND TOTAL COUNT



	Black	White, non-Hispanic	Hispanic
Total Households with Children	2,646	2,386	1,267
Single Parent Households	1,357	775	537
Percentage of Single Parent Households with Children	51.3%	32.5%	42.4%

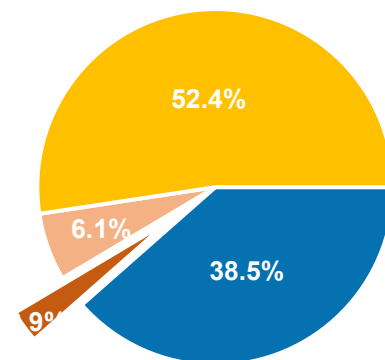
Total Children	
In married-couple families:	6,830 59.9%
In other families:	4,573 40.1%
Male householder, no spouse present:	1,137 24.9%
Female householder, no spouse present:	3,436 75.1%

Black or African American Household Types, 2019



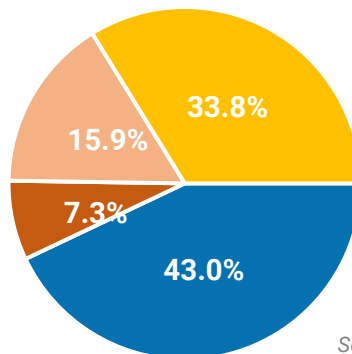
Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year estimates

White, Non-Hispanic Household Types, 2019



Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year estimates

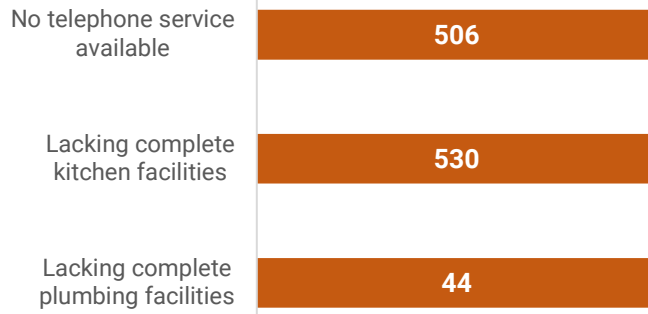
Hispanic or Latinx Household Types, 2019



Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year estimates

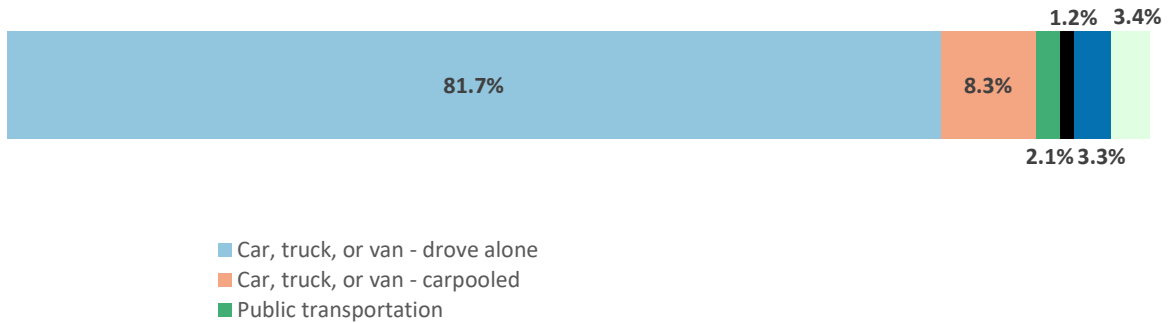


Count of Households Lacking Basic Facilities



Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates

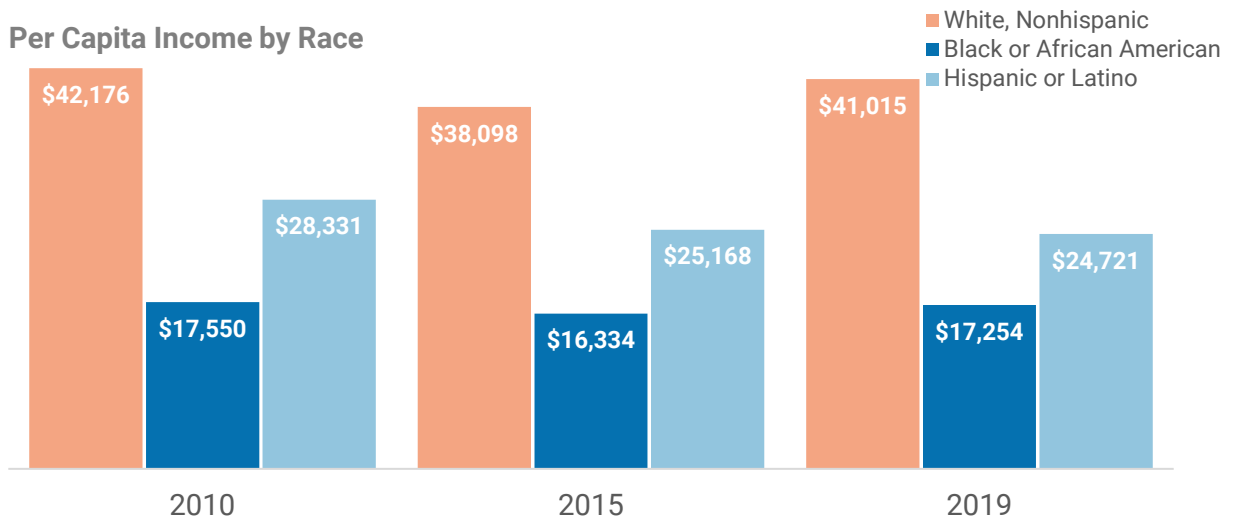
Breakdown of Boynton Commuters, 2019



Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates

Economic Stability and Resilience

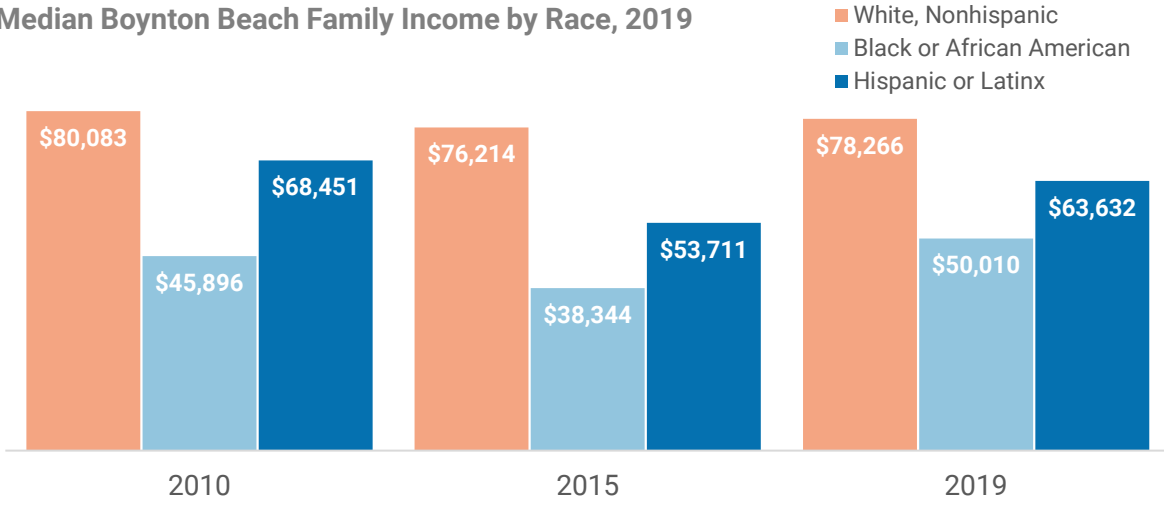
Per Capita Income by Race



Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates

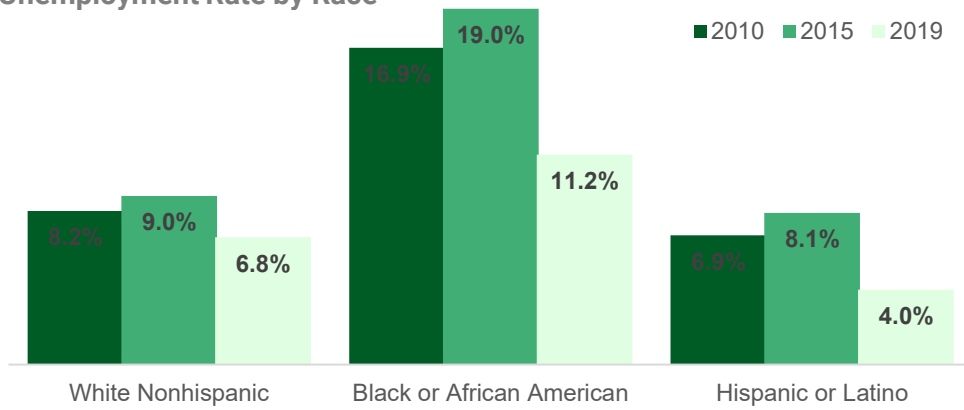


Median Boynton Beach Family Income by Race, 2019



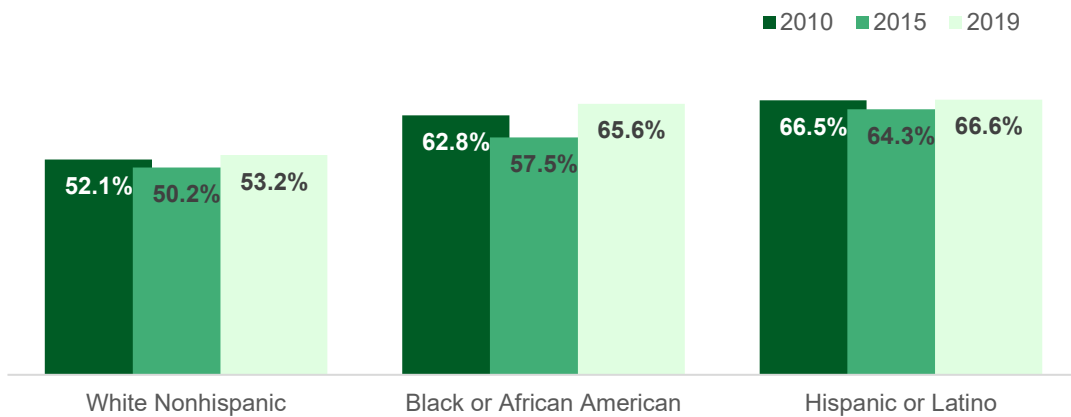
Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates

Unemployment Rate by Race



Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates

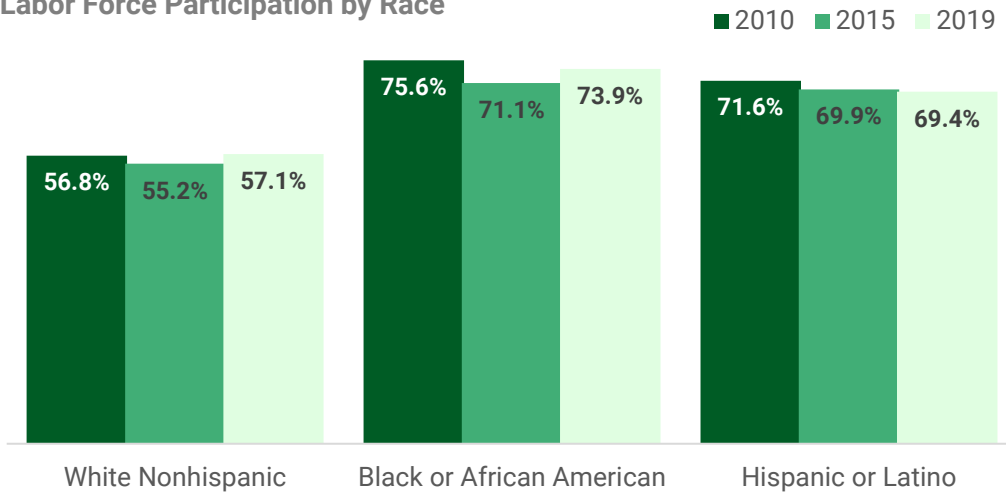
Employment by Race



Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates

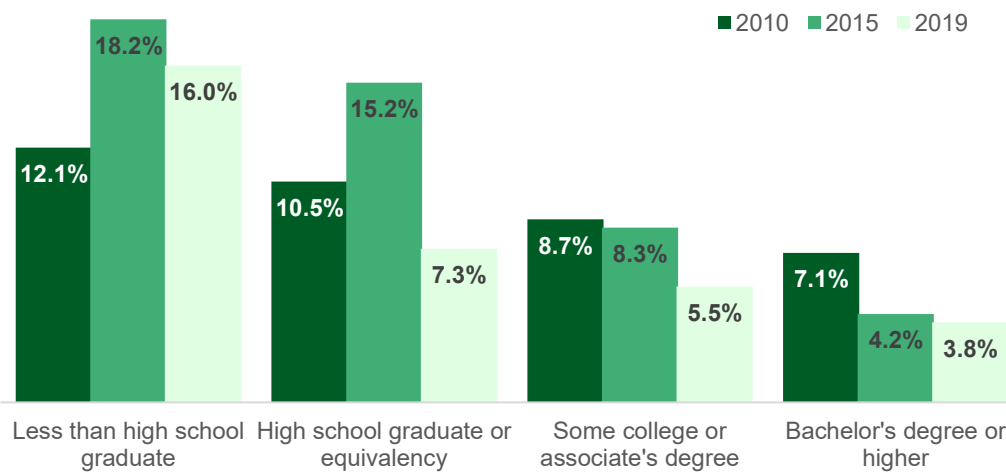


Labor Force Participation by Race



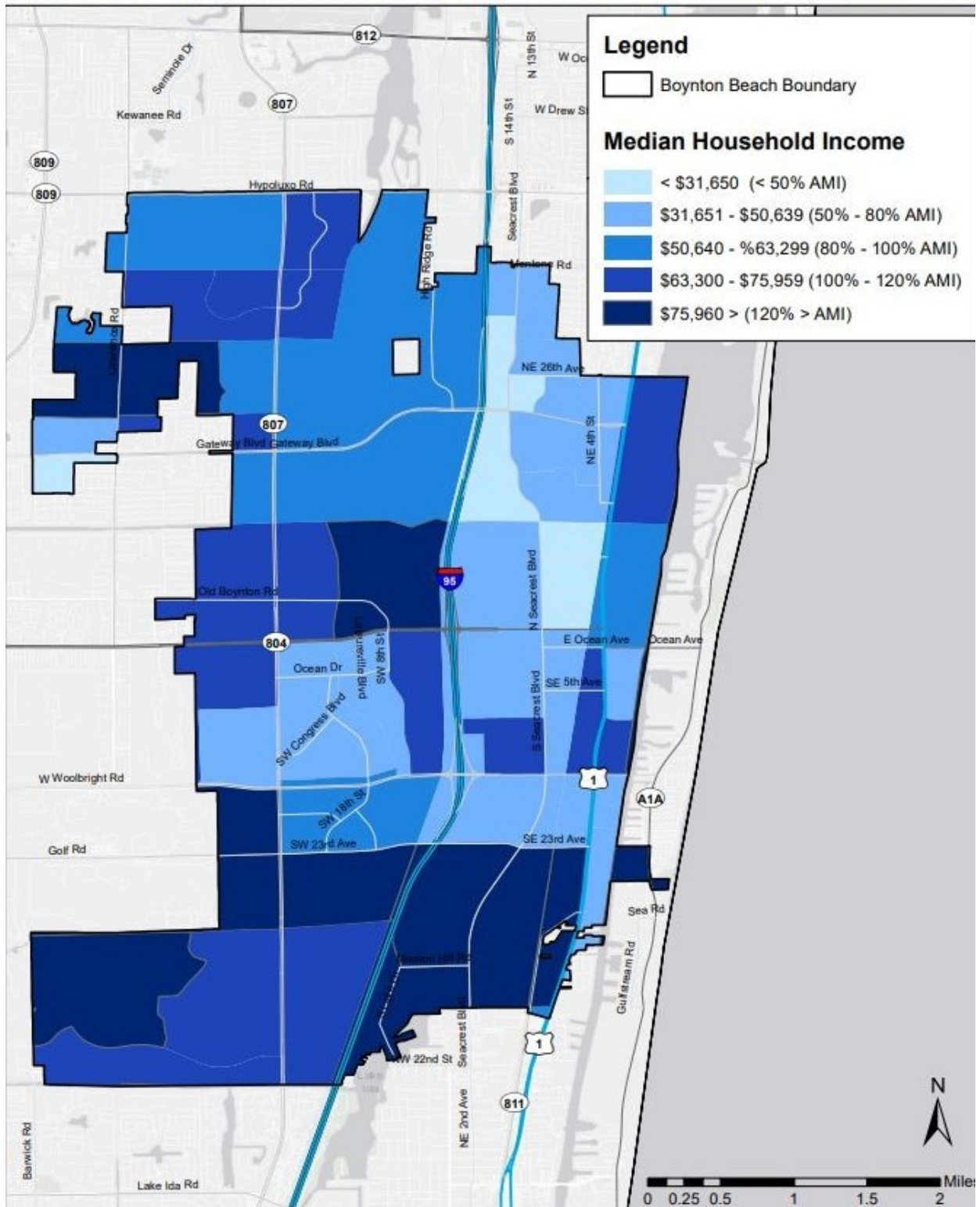
Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates

Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment



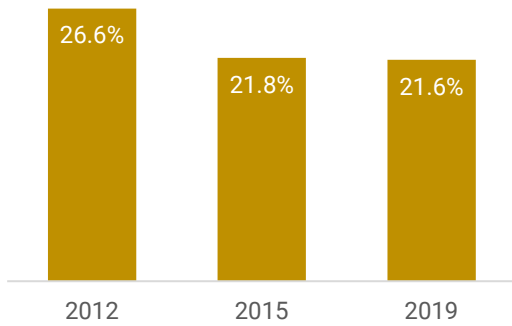
Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates

Boynton Beach Median Household Income as Percentage of AMI



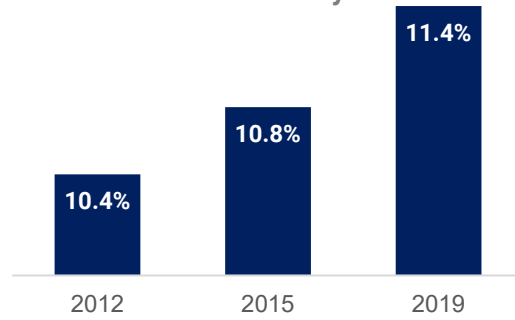


Child Poverty Rates



Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates

Senior-Citizen Poverty Rates



Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates

Jobs Counts by Places (Cities, CDPs, etc.) Where Workers are Employed - All Jobs		
	2018	
	Count	Share
Boca Raton city, FL	4,211	12.40%
Boynton Beach city, FL	3,909	11.50%
Delray Beach city, FL	2,867	8.40%
West Palm Beach city, FL	2,496	7.30%
Palm Springs village, FL	1,393	4.10%
Fort Lauderdale city, FL	832	2.40%
Deerfield Beach city, FL	612	1.80%
Pompano Beach city, FL	479	1.40%
Wellington village, FL	436	1.30%
Palm Beach Gardens city, FL	425	1.20%
All Other Locations	16,409	48.20%

Breakdown of Individuals in Poverty, 2019

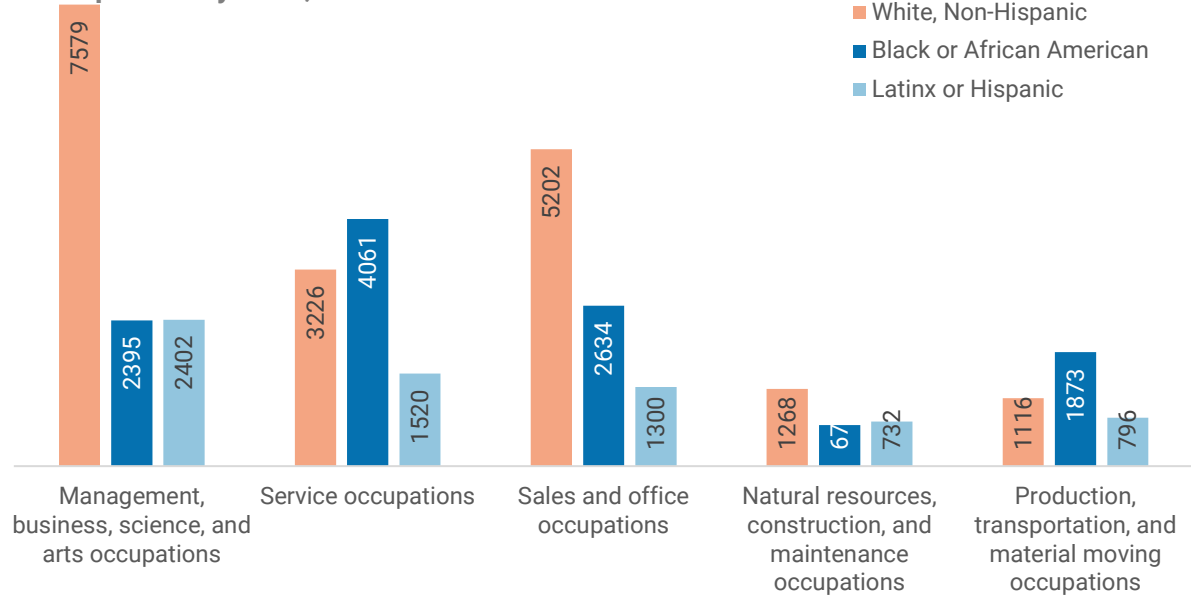


- White, NonHispanic
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latinx
- Other Races/Ethnicities

Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates

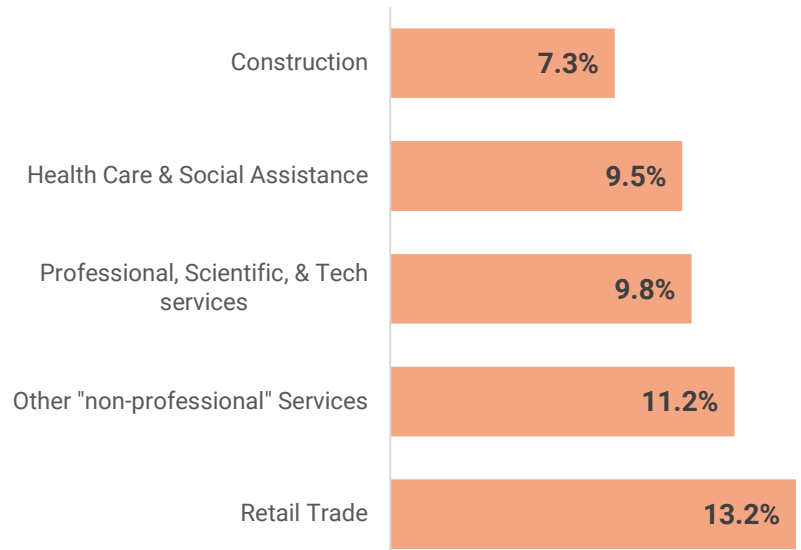


Occupations by Race, 2019



Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates

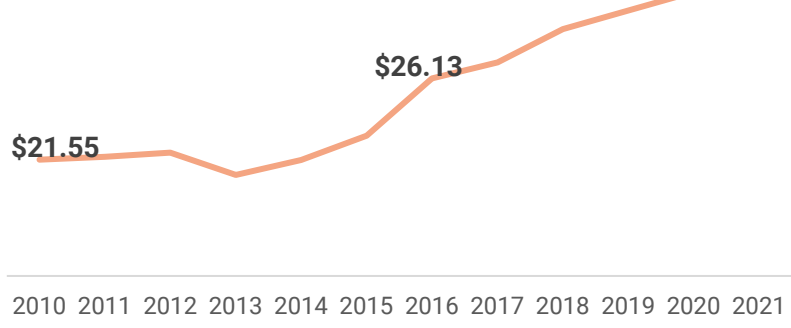
Top 5 Businesses in Boynton by Number of Establishments - NAIC



Source: ESRI Business Analyst - Summary Report

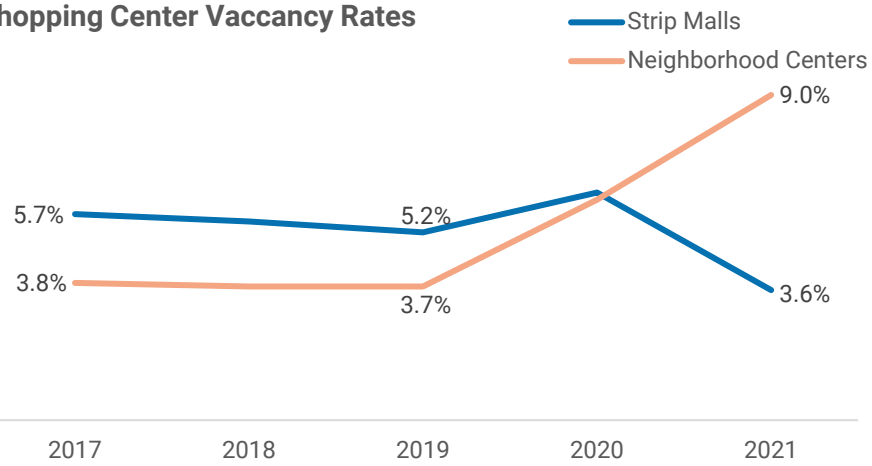


Boynton Beach Office Rental Rate Per Square Foot **\$31.85**



Source: Costar – Underwriting Reports

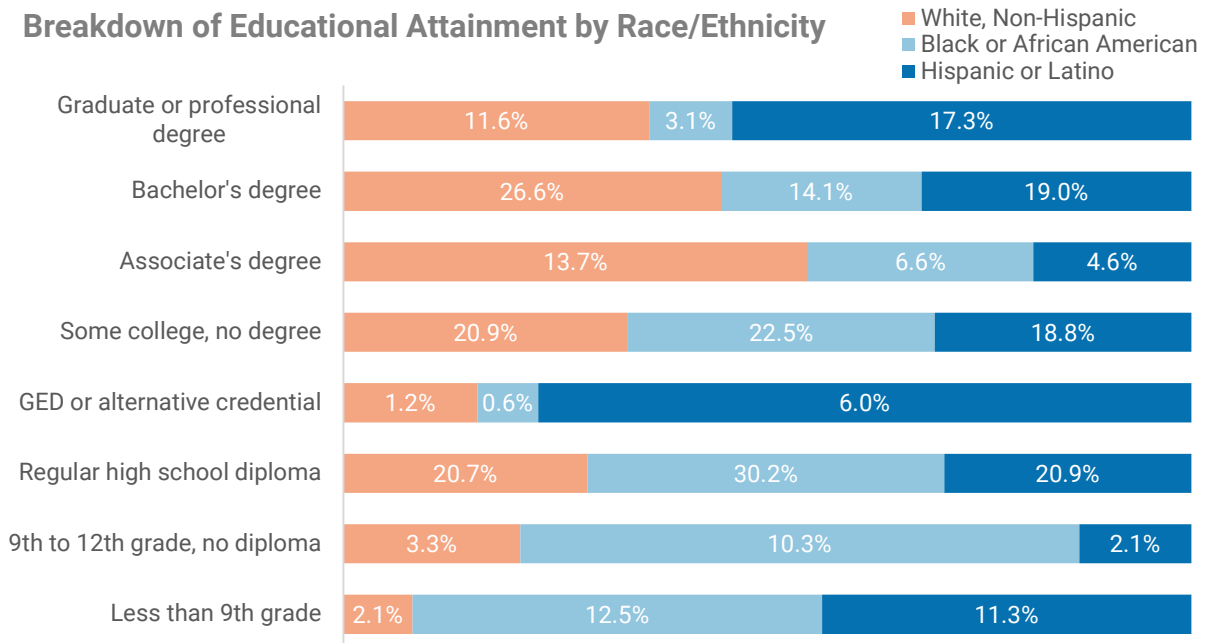
Shopping Center Vaccancy Rates



Source: COSTAR Underwriting Reports

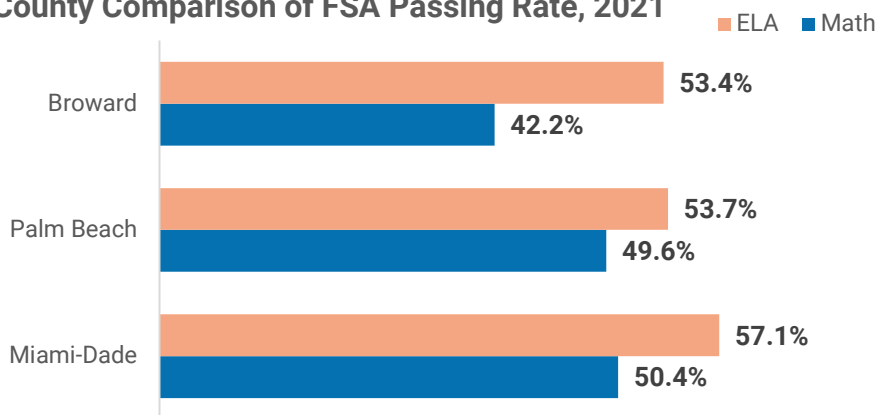
Education

Breakdown of Educational Attainment by Race/Ethnicity



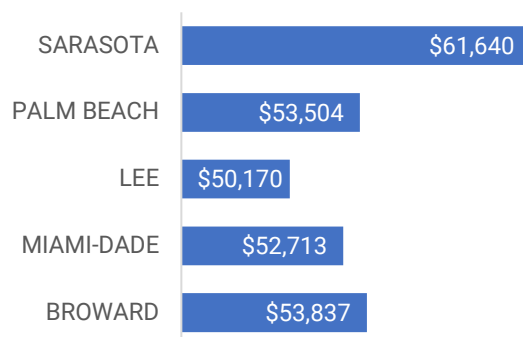
Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 1-Year Estimates

County Comparison of FSA Passing Rate, 2021



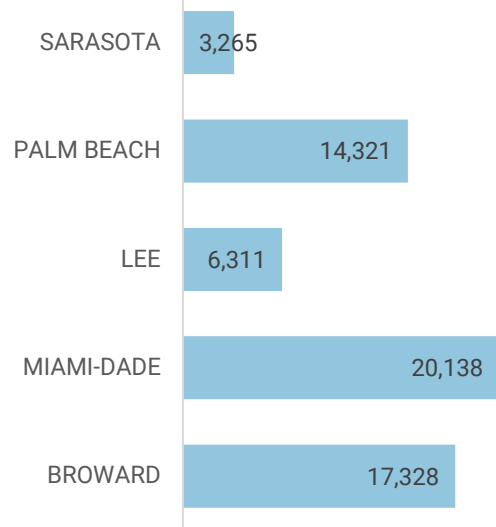
Source: FL Dept. of Education - Student Assessment Data

District Comparison of Teacher Salaries

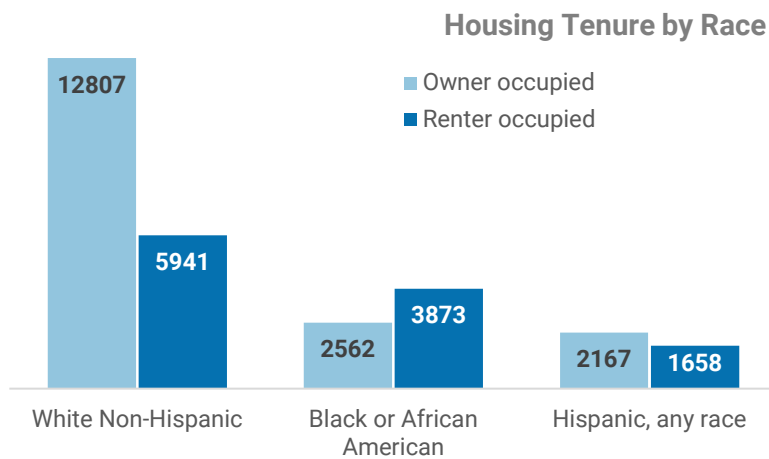




District Comparison of Instructional Staff Count

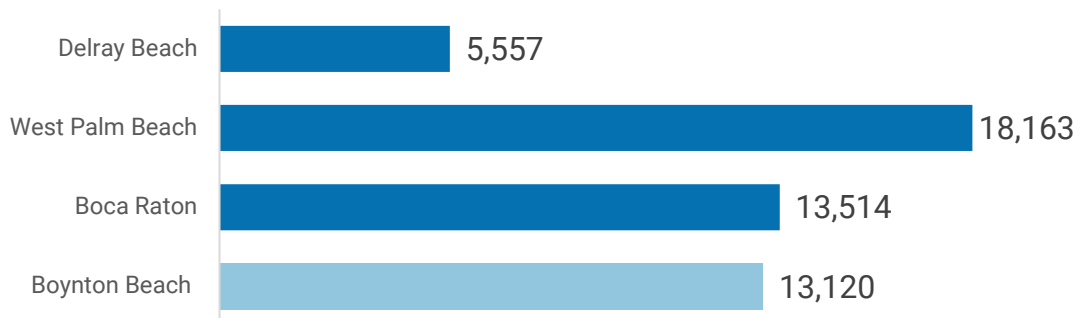


Housing Affordability and Homeownership



Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates

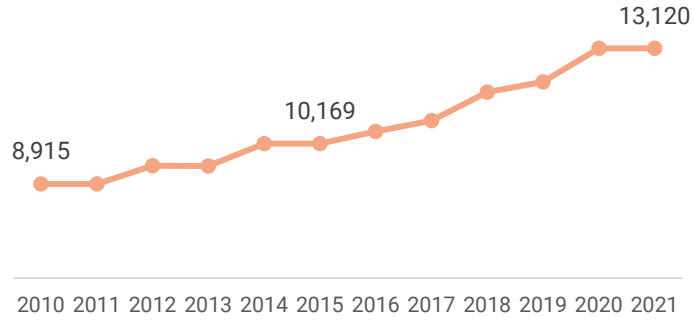
Multi-Family Home Inventories



Source: COSTAR Underwriting Reports, 2021

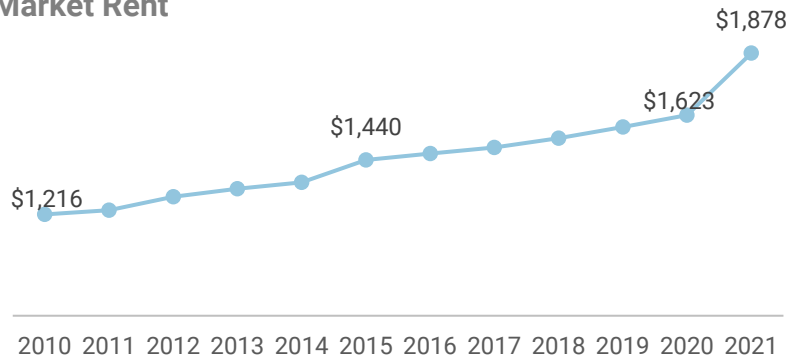


Apartment-Unit Supply



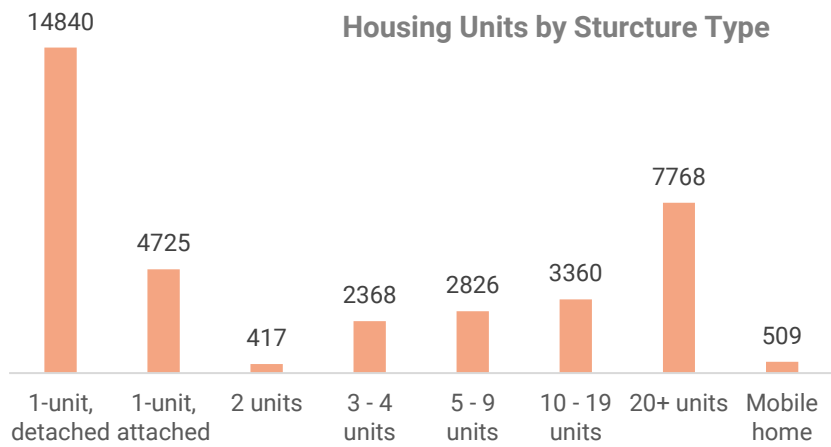
Source: COSTAR Underwriting Reports, 2021

Market Rent



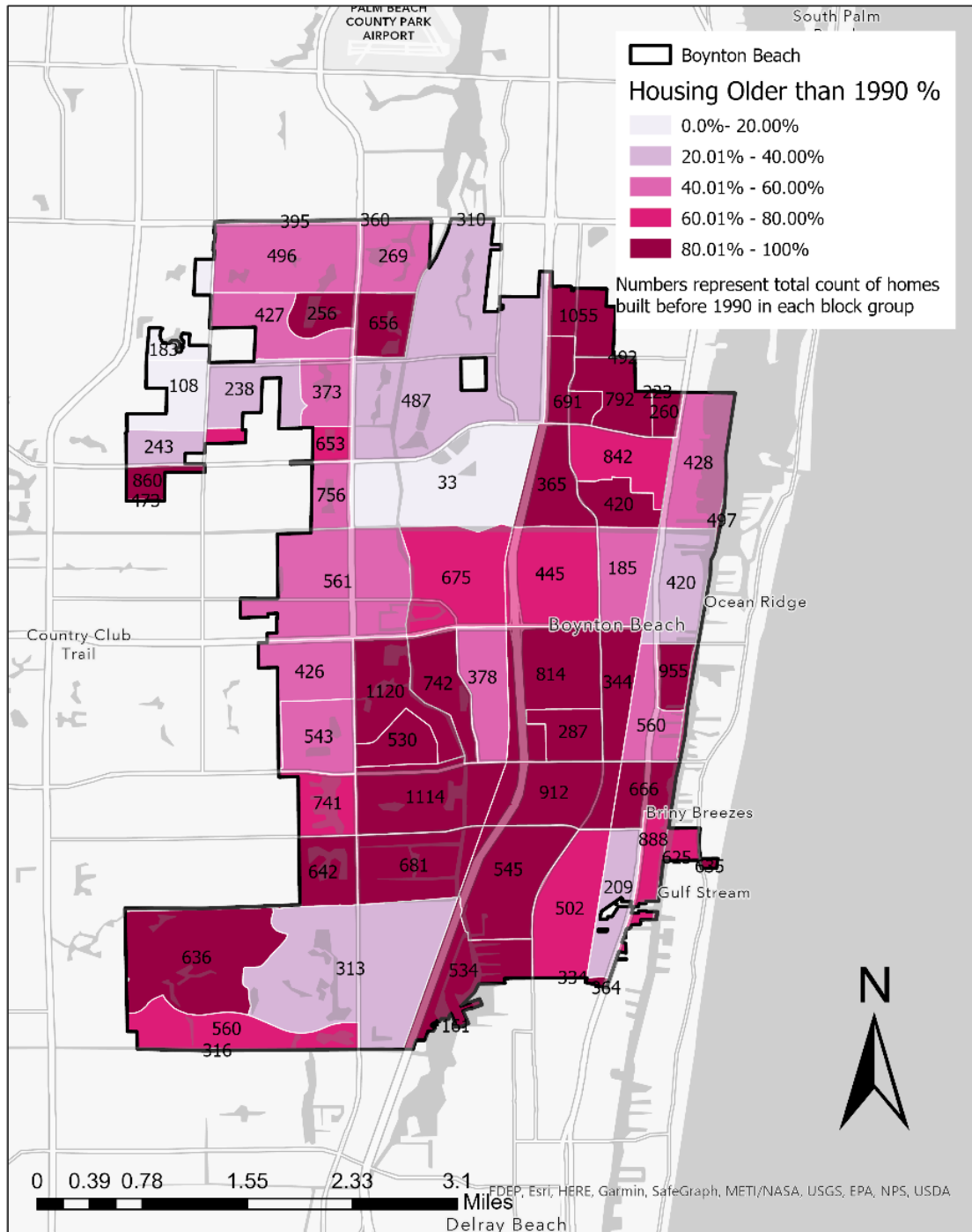
Source: COSTAR Underwriting Reports, 2021

Housing Units by Structure Type



Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 5-Year Estimates

CONCENTRATION OF HOMES BUILT BEFORE 1990 IN BOYNTON BEACH



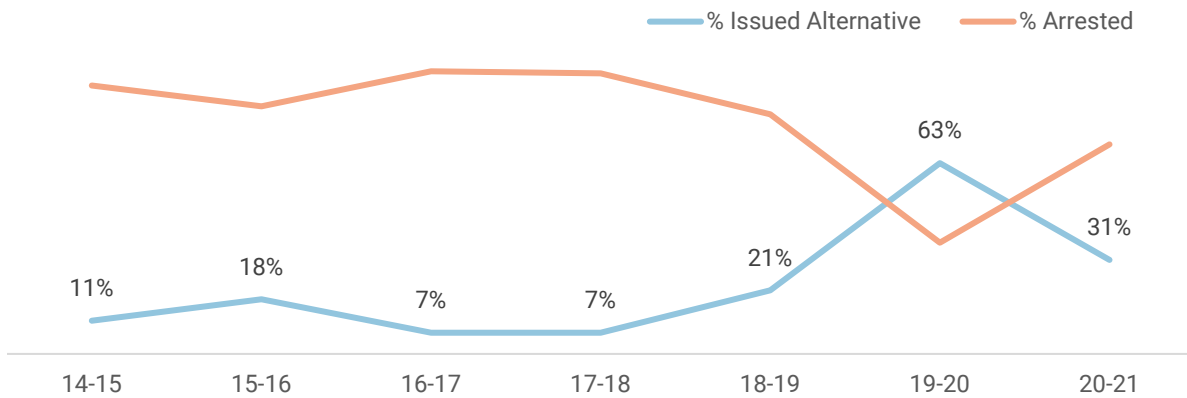
Criminal Justice and Safety

Boynton Beach Offense/Crime Data, 2010-2020.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Population	67,483	68,409	68,741	70,131	71,608	72,784	73,163	73,992	76,756	77,696	78,495
Total Crime Index	3,779	3,732	3,384	3,367	3,257	3,657	4,067	3,621	3,441	3,184	2,317
% Index Change Y-O-Y	-11.1	-1.2	-9.3	-0.5	-3.3	12.3	11.2	-11.0	-5.0	-7.5	-27.2
Violent Crime	584	389	396	361	378	505	495	445	477	566	523
Violent Crime Rate	865	569	576	515	528	694	677	601	621	728	666
Murder	4	4	5	8	4	8	1	9	4	4	9
Rape	7	7	8	8	6	4	3	15	21	30	20
Robbery	143	123	127	100	76	153	167	175	134	120	105
Aggravated Assault ⁽¹⁾	430	255	256	245	292	340	324	246	318	412	389
Property Crime	3,195	3,343	2,988	3,006	2,879	3,152	3,572	3,176	2,964	2,618	1,794
Property Crime Rate	4,735	4,887	4,347	4,286	4,021	4,331	4,882	4,292	3,862	3,370	2,285
Burglary	727	776	627	611	524	512	566	384	256	254	153
Larceny	2,361	2,426	2,210	2,278	2,193	2,442	2,752	2,454	2,423	2,147	1,468
Motor Vehicle Theft	107	141	151	117	162	198	254	338	285	217	173
Crime Rate Per 100,000 Population	5,600	5,455	4,923	4,801	4,548	5,025	5,559	4,894	4,483	4,098	2,952
% Rate Change Year-Over-Year	-11.8	-2.6	-9.8	-2.5	-5.3	10.5	10.6	-12.0	-8.4	-8.6	-28.0
Clearance Rate Per 100 Offenses	27.9	22.6	24.0	28.8	31.9	22.7	23.2	18.0	19.4	21.4	18.0



Eligible Youth Civil Citations and Arrests in Boynton Beach by Fiscal Year



Source: Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. Delinquency Profile Dashboard.

Youth Intake/Arrests by Race and Fiscal Year

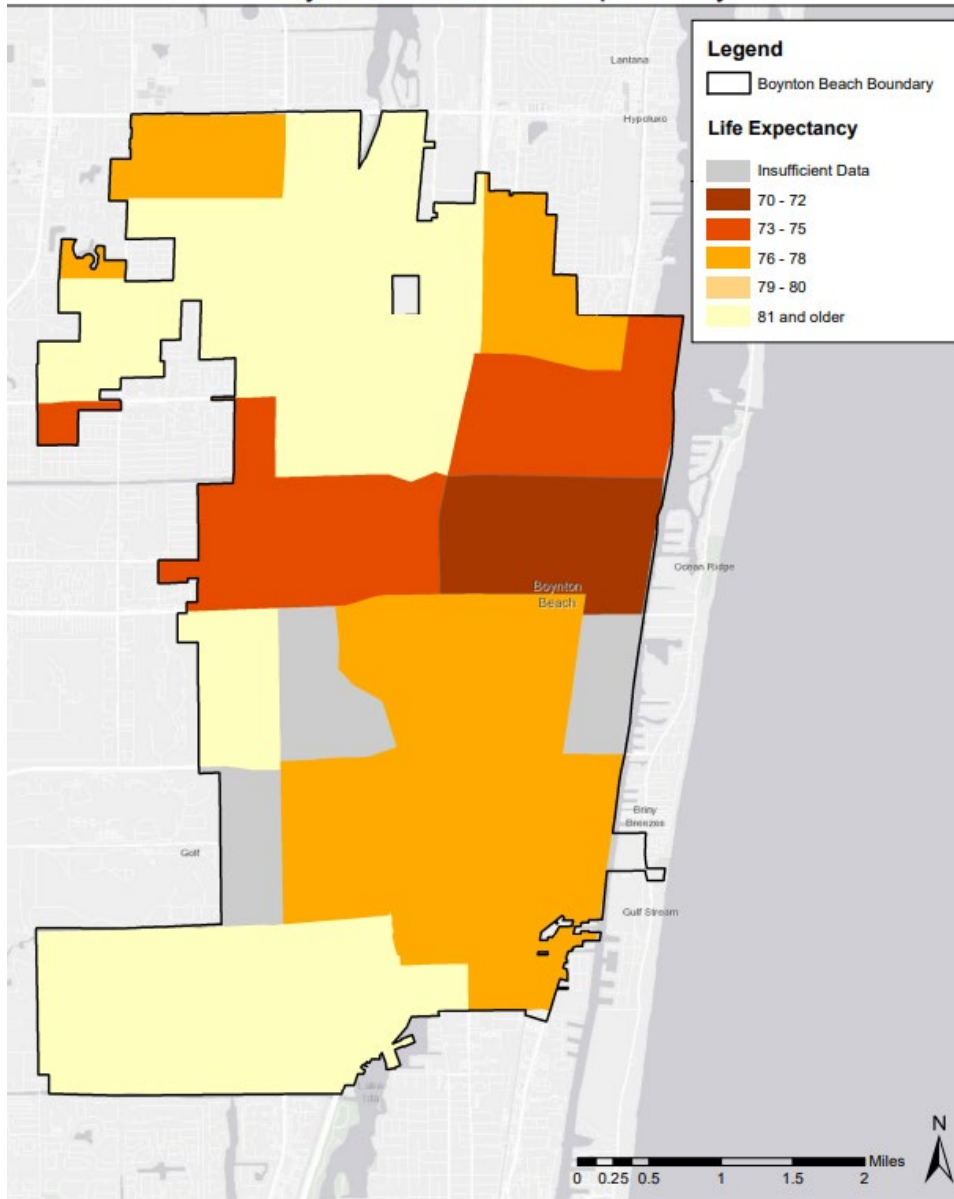
	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Black	76%	83%	88%	82%	79%
White	14%	9%	7%	13%	13%
Hispanic	10%	8%	5%	5%	8%

Boynton Arrest by Race Compared to Population Race

	% Arrested White	% Arrested Black	% Population White	% Population Black
2010	51.8%	48.0%	62.8%	31.7%
2015	54.7%	45.0%	66.2%	26.3%
2019	41.8%	57.9%	62.6%	32.8%



Healthcare Access and Health Outcomes Boynton Beach Life Expectancy



Percentage of Live Births Under 2500g by Race in Palm Beach

