Pasadena
Vibrant Community
An initiative of The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, made possible by an investment from, and collaboration with, Shell USA, Inc.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Pasadena Vibrant Community is an initiative of The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, made possible by an investment from, and collaboration with, Shell USA, Inc. Development of this report was made possible by a collaboration between the Be Well Communities™ team and the division of Institutional Affairs.
The City of Pasadena is the second most populous city in Harris County, Texas, located about 20 miles from downtown Houston.

Total population 153,350

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<tr>
<th>Median age</th>
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<td>Population under 18</td>
<td>45,674</td>
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<td>Population 18-64</td>
<td>92,352</td>
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<td>Population over 65</td>
<td>15,324</td>
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Race/ethnicity

- Hispanic or Latino (any race) 108,092 70.5%
- White alone 36,751 24%
- Black/African American alone 3,586 2.3%
- Asian alone 3,008 2%
- Other 1,913 1.2%

70.5% HISPANIC OR LATINO

High school graduate (population age 25 and over) 66,281 72.2%

Median household income $55,039

Poverty rate 17%

No health insurance 40,172 26.30%

Source: US census American Community Survey, 2014 – 2018 5-year estimates
PASADENA VIBRANT COMMUNITY

Prevention is a cornerstone of The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center’s mission to eliminate cancer. Researchers estimate that up to half of all cancers can be prevented through healthy lifestyle behaviors. A critical step in reducing cancer incidence and chronic disease overall is to effectively execute evidence-based interventions for prevention at the population level. MD Anderson launched Be Well Communities™, an initiative of the Cancer Prevention and Control Platform, within the Moon Shots Program®, to work with communities to deploy effective interventions.

Pasadena Vibrant Community is an initiative of The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center made possible by an investment from, and collaboration with, Shell USA, Inc. Initiated in 2016, Pasadena Vibrant Community brought together individuals, schools, workplaces, government agencies, health care providers and policy makers to carry out sustainable, community-led solutions that would make positive, long-lasting changes in peoples’ health.

Shell served as an investor and collaborative partner from the inception of Pasadena Vibrant Community, throughout the implementation phase, into the development of a sustainability plan where they continue to provide volunteer support.

MD Anderson served as the backbone organization. In this role, MD Anderson led the Steering Committee, aligned partner activities and programs to achieve shared goals, and evaluated the collective effort of the initiative. MD Anderson also shepherded the sustainability process to ensure success of the initiative and a long-term commitment to health and wellness broadly.

The Pasadena Vibrant Community Steering Committee, inclusive of MD Anderson, Shell, and 8 community organizations, developed a Community Action Plan aimed at creating a long-lasting culture of health within, and led by, the community.

“This project extends our philosophy of empowering staff to thrive through care, into the community, and reflects our leadership commitment to a culture of health for all. Congratulations to our Pasadena partners for crafting sustainable community-based primary prevention interventions to reduce the burden of chronic disease and childhood obesity.

Faiyaz Bhojani, M.D.
Chief Medical Officer,
Shell USA, Inc.

October 2017
The work of the Community Action Plan was carried out by seven collaborating organizations funded to deliver programs and resources focused on healthy eating and physical activity. The collaborating organizations were supported by the MD Anderson team to execute the Community Action Plan through provision of tailored capacity building, technical assistance, and fostering a collaborative working environment between organizations.

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The Community Action Plan the Steering Committee delivered was comprehensive. It included 19 evidence-based interventions focused on healthy eating and active living. Interventions ranged from supporting staff, delivering individualized diabetes prevention programs, delivering programming such as community exercise classes, and building places for physical activity, such as playgrounds and tracks.

Over three years, the implementation of the Community Action Plan had a positive impact on the health of the community and created a strong network of community partners who will lead work far into the future. The activities and results of the Community Action Plan are described in this report. This initiative can serve as a model for other cities across Texas and the nation.
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Sources
1 – Robert Wood Johnson Foundation What Works for Health strategies
2 – US Department of Health and Human Services, The Guide to Community Preventive Services
PASADENA INDEPENDENT
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Pasadena ISD (PISD) is among the 30 largest school districts in Texas and one of the fastest growing. It is a majority minority school district, with 89% of the 55,397 students from a minority group. 77% of students are economically disadvantaged, 60% are considered academically at-risk and close to 30% are English Language Learners. The mission of PISD is to create unlimited opportunities for students by empowering them to be the best they can be. The district was an early adopter of coordinated school health programming, making investments in teacher training and hiring staff at the district level to address the complex needs of the whole child.

Program Implementation

PISD has implemented numerous interventions as a part of Pasadena Vibrant Community deploying a multicomponent school-based obesity prevention intervention. This approach is consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance for healthy schools, following the Whole School, Whole Child, Whole Community (WSCC) model. The CDC indicated that the “WSCC model focuses its attention on the child, emphasizes a school-wide approach, and acknowledges learning, health, and the school as being a part, and reflection of, the local community.” * As a part of the multi-component approach, PISD executed 10 interventions to improve the physical activity and healthy eating knowledge and behavior of all students in the district. This included embedding more than 50 lessons into the standard curriculum and training school professionals in kinesthetic and movement-based learning. Additionally, the district made several infrastructure improvements to enhance the physical environment of campuses, which were made available to all community members.

Pasadena Vibrant Community prioritized public schools because of their reach within the community. This is consistent with best practices that have demonstrated that healthy eating and active living interventions with a school component are effective at preventing obesity. In addition to the work conducted and led by the district, PISD served as a central hub for all work that was done within the community. PISD shared broad communications across the district, engaging community members in the School Health Advisory Committee, supported other collaborating organizations efforts — for example, serving as Brighter Bites locations, hosting walk to school days, serving on the Pasadena Healthy Parks Plan committee — and hosted events, including the Walk for Sight, to encourage the whole district to get active and healthy.
Impact

- **2 tracks** were built impacting **1,000+ students** and the school community
- **2 playgrounds** were built impacting **1,200+ students** and the school community
- **27 garden beds** were built for nine campus gardens
- **241 Campus Health Advisory Committee members** were engaged to identify and increase physical activity opportunities on campuses
- **251 teachers and staff** were trained on movement-based learning strategies to align with the Texas Essential Knowledge Standards (state standards for what students should know and be able to do)
- **12,591 PISD employees** participated in one or more activities of the worksite wellness program
- **54,000 students** impacted by elementary, middle, intermediate and high school programming
- **87 teachers** at 19 middle, intermediate and high schools received physical education equipment and training, resulting in a district-wide increase in the number of students achieving the FITNESSGRAM performance standard for the healthy fitness zone
- **Significant increase in 4th grade students’ days per week of engagement** in moderate to vigorous physical activity

After three years of implementation, PISD has achieved many positive outcomes across the district. It has incorporated this approach into the district’s strategic plan, within the coordinated school health curriculum and instruction, and in physical education departments to ensure long-term sustainability. The district will also continue to support full-time funded staff focused on these efforts. Staff will continue to convene the School Health Advisory Committee to support wellness internally, as well as continue to participate in community-based efforts to support the culture of health across the city. The long-term work of the district in these areas will continue to impact the health and wellness of students, staff and the whole community.

Brighter Bites is a comprehensive, multi-component school program that increases access to fresh vegetables and fruits, combined with nutrition education, for obesity prevention among children from low income homes, and their families. Their goal is to help curb the childhood obesity epidemic in Texas by increasing demand for fresh vegetables and fruits, leading to better family eating habits and improved health outcomes. Based on a two-year study conducted by The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, Brighter Bites participants, both children and parents, showed statistically significant increases in their weekly intake of fresh vegetables and fruits, as well as decreased intake of processed sugar.

Program Implementation

As a Pasadena Vibrant Community collaborating organization, Brighter Bites was able to expand their program into additional PISD elementary schools, expand the variety of produce offered, and maintain implementation and relationship with the campuses over the long term. Each week for eight weeks, in the fall and spring semesters, families received 50 servings of fresh vegetables and fruits. The food came with recipe cards written in English and Spanish detailing how to prepare each item. Brighter Bites also prepared samples for families to taste test during the food distributions to whet appetites and build excitement. All of this encouraged cooking at home and enhanced awareness — families learned to read food labels and make more healthful choices. Plus, healthy eating habits developed in youth can have long-term benefits.

Impact

- **12 Pasadena ISD elementary schools** impacted
- **28,000 students** and their families impacted
- **900,000 pounds** of food distributed to PISD families
- Demonstrated increase in vegetable and fruit intake for participating families

For the schools participating in this program, there was a significant increase in student’s consumption of fresh vegetables and fruits, which drove down their intake of refined sugars and processed foods. PISD and Brighter Bites remain committed to providing this program over the long-term.

“A hungry student is a distracted student. That’s why the Brighter Bites program is so beneficial to our school. If a student doesn’t have to worry about where their next meal is coming from, they can focus more on their classwork.”

Dana Babineaux
School Counselor, Sparks Elementary

July 2019
HARRIS COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

Harris County Public Health (HCPH) is the health department for the unincorporated area of Harris County, Texas, and its 33 independent municipalities: a jurisdiction of 2.1 million people, which includes Pasadena. Guided by the principles of innovation, engagement, and equity, HCPH was named Local Health Department of the Year in 2016. HCPH is committed to deploying resources that support people to be healthy. In addition to providing public health services, HCPH also manages community health improvement efforts including the Healthy Living Matters (HLM) initiative to curb childhood obesity. HLM Pasadena was a coalition of Pasadena area stakeholders and community members with an interest in the health and wellness of the community who convene to secure funding, add additional support, and build capacity for Pasadena.

Through Pasadena Vibrant Community, HCPH executed evidence-based interventions to promote active transportation to school via Safe Routes to Schools, and to address nutrition and physical activity in early childcare centers via Project OLE! Texas.
Program Implementation

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Research shows that walking or biking to school has both mental and physical benefits for students. Walkers and bikers show better academic performance, reduced anxiety and depression, and improved concentration, memory and sleep. They arrive at school fully awake and ready to learn. The physical benefits include a reduced risk for obesity and diabetes, healthy weight and blood pressure, as well as stronger bones, joints and muscles.

Students can be encouraged to walk or ride to school through the development of a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) plan. When enacted, a SRTS plan not only results in students walking to school, it also fosters safer neighborhoods, decreases the likelihood of pedestrian fatalities and injuries, and reduces the long-term risk of developing childhood obesity.

Pasadena Vibrant Community supported a partnership between HCPH, HLM Pasadena, PISD, and the City of Pasadena’s Planning Department, to design and implement Pasadena SRTS Plan.

The SRTS plan helped to identify safer routes for students walking, biking, skateboarding or scootering to school. Additionally, PISD schools hosted events that provided the resources necessary to support student groups accompanied by parent volunteers to walk or bike to school, ensuring that everyone has fun while remaining safe. The community provided overwhelming support for the events including bike and helmet donations, event volunteers and much more.

Impact

- **19 community meetings** hosted to create buy-in and support for SRTS
- **125 physical education teachers** trained in SRTS principles
- **3,352 students** participated in SRTS walk and roll to school days over three years at 13 PISD campuses
- Pasadena SRTS efforts were commended in 2017 by the Houston-Galveston Area Council’s “Our Great Region Award”

SRTS implementation has gone beyond the school campus. Harris County Public Health also led a design contest with PISD high school art students to design artistic crosswalks for seven elementary schools. Seven artistic crosswalks were installed in August 2021 with support from the City of Pasadena and Pasadena Vibrant Community. The city has also taken several of the SRTS recommendations and used them in their street renovation projects. Not only are streets safer for students walking to school, they are safer for all pedestrians.
Program Implementation

PROJECT OLE! TEXAS

Children learn by doing, especially the very young. They yearn to gain experiential knowledge by exploring the new, exciting, beautiful world outside their homes. Project OLE! (Outdoor Learning Environment) Texas is a state-wide initiative brought to Greater Houston by HCPH. OLE! Texas transforms early childhood spaces through research-inspired designs that increase physical activity and connection with the natural world. The initiative adds design elements like looping pathways, vegetable gardens, and more play and learning settings, to enable young children to be active, learn in nature and develop motor skills. It has received national attention as an innovative and evidence-based approach to increasing childhood physical activity and healthy food awareness.

As a Pasadena Vibrant Community collaborating organization, HCPH partnered with Project OLE! Texas to equip three early childcare centers — Pasadena Head Start, Agape Christian Preschool and San Jacinto College Lab School — with enhanced outdoor learning environments. The program also includes an educational component to provide caregivers with a curriculum related to physical activity and health behaviors, as well as training opportunities in nature play and gardening. Studies show that schools with outdoor classrooms and other forms of nature-based experiential education support significant student gains in social studies, science, language, arts and math.

Impact

- **218 students and 42 teachers** impacted
- **Three early childhood development centers** received enhanced outdoor learning environments
- **Significant increase in the minutes of physical activity** at the centers after site improvements

By instilling an appreciation for both nature and physical activity, some of the youngest Texans in Pasadena developed the healthy habits that will benefit them for a lifetime, and the early childcare centers will reach many more students with these same lessons due to the significant training received, and infrastructure changes made on site.
YMCA OF GREATER HOUSTON

As a well-established organization across the U.S., the YMCA has an incredible track record for delivering and evaluating their evidence-based programs. Sports teach teamwork, discipline, how to win graciously and how to lose honorably. These are the types of lessons that benefit young people for the rest of their lives. Organized youth sports like soccer are also positively associated with strong academic performance, low juvenile arrest rates, and low teen birth rates. Beyond the social benefits, research indicates that access to publicly provided recreation programs can reduce children’s risk of becoming overweight and obese.

Program Implementation

As a Pasadena Vibrant Community collaborating organization, the YMCA coordinated after school soccer clubs in partnership with PISD middle schools. The clubs ran on four campuses for 16 weeks — eight weeks in the Fall semester and eight weeks in the Spring semester — with two sessions per week. Each session ran 90 minutes and was packed with exercise and fun for everyone involved.

Impact

- **497 total soccer sessions** held
- **446 children** participated in the after-school soccer program across four PISD campuses

Through bringing in established methodologies tailored specifically to fit the Pasadena community, PISD students learned valuable lifelong lessons about being a team member and being physically active.
MD ANDERSON CENTER FOR ENERGY BALANCE

Many people think that cancer is solely a disease of the genes — that family history and genetics are the prime drivers. It’s either an inevitability or not a risk, based on family history. The fact is that up to 50% of all cancers can be prevented through a conscious decision to make healthy choices lifelong habits. MD Anderson’s Center for Energy Balance in Cancer Prevention helps bridge the knowledge gap about the relationship between physical activity, nutrition, obesity and cancer.

Program Implementation

The Center for Energy Balance partnered with PISD to offer a technology-based weight management intervention for its employees as part of Pasadena Vibrant Community, by teaching healthy eating, physical activity and portion control to participants. Due to the overwhelming interest in the program, the team was able to accommodate over 100 more participants by offering a basic program. The basic program did not offer all of the physical program components (i.e. fitbit). The participants that remained engaged throughout the program both basic and plus saw positive outcomes. Those who enrolled in the program were divided into two groups: Vibrant Lives Basic and Vibrant Lives Plus. Available in English and Spanish, the program lasted six months and comprised 16 lesson plans, daily text messages, an invitation to a private Facebook group with weekly challenges, and access to local health promotion resources and events. The Vibrant Lives Plus cohort received a Fitbit and Wi-Fi connected scale that measured body fat, gave monthly Fitbit challenges, and opportunities to receive support coaching. Simple changes supported by technology helped people make the changes needed for weight loss.

Impact

- **143** completing the basic program and 44% of the completers lost at least 3% of their baseline weight
- **284** completing the plus program and 46% of the completers lost at least 3% of their baseline weight
- Over 73% of participants in both programs would recommend it to their family and friends

These programs are effective. People can lose weight and improve their health through technology-based interventions. Lessons learned were integrated into the PISD Worksite Wellness approach to help ensure continued improved health for some of the most essential members of our community: those who teach our children.
MEMORIAL HERMANN COMMUNITY BENEFIT CORPORATION

To advance Memorial Hermann’s vision of creating healthier communities, the Memorial Hermann Community Benefit Corporation implements initiatives built on the foundation of four intersecting pillars — access to healthcare, emotional well-being, food as health, and exercise is medicine — taking them outside their campuses and into the community.

Program Implementation

As a Pasadena Vibrant Community collaborating organization, Memorial Hermann Community Benefit Corporation implemented a community health worker (CHW) program dedicated to Pasadena. The CHW served as a critical link between the Pasadena community, and health and social service systems located at various places throughout the greater Pasadena area. The CHW helped to reduce health disparities, boost health care quality and cultural competence, and empower individuals and communities for better health. Working not only within the Pasadena area, but with the Pasadena Vibrant Community Steering Committee, the CHW connected community members to needed resources, provided eligibility support for social service applications, and facilitated health literacy workshops on diabetes prevention and self-management, healthcare access, stress control, and the Good Questions for Good Health course.

Impact

- **292 unique clients** were assisted by the community health worker program over two years

- **Almost half (49.7%) of individuals** completing health and social service applications were approved for eligibility services, granting them and their family members access to more affordable health care options and healthy food choices

- **Three staff members at the North Pasadena Community Outreach Center** were supported and obtained their CHW certification. They continue to serve Pasadena by empowering individuals through education and navigation services

Through this work, the CHW helped to increase health knowledge and self-sufficiency through education, navigation, collaboration and advocacy. By working directly with the North Pasadena Community Outreach Center, additional resources have now been activated in the community to serve residents for years to come.
PASADENA PARKS AND RECREATION

Pasadena is home to nearly 50 parks. Parks help build community connections and offer options to engage in physical activity, which is proven to reduce stress and depression, and lower overall rates of illness.

Program Implementation

Prior to becoming a Pasadena Vibrant Community collaborating organization, the City of Pasadena Parks and Recreation Department had not offered adult recreation classes in many years. With the funding and support from Pasadena Vibrant Community, the department started adult exercise classes at six locations throughout the city — Sunset Recreation Center, Fogo Recreation Center, PAL Gymnasium, Golden Acres Recreation Center, O’Dell Harrison Recreation Center, and the Multipurpose Recreation Center. Additionally, summer aquatics and river walking classes were hosted at Strawberry Park pool.

The Parks Department also built two new playgrounds, one at Red Bluff Park, which is co-located with the O’Dell Harrison Recreation Center, and one at Gardens Park. Both playgrounds were much needed for the neighborhoods; as soon as the ribbons were cut children were clamoring to play on the new structures.

With a goal of ensuring that Pasadena continues to thrive by making its parks healthy, welcoming, and accessible to all, the City of Pasadena developed the Pasadena Healthy Parks Plan. Community input helped the city assess the existing park system resources and programming, and develop a long-term vision for a healthy, equitable park system. The plan was adopted by Pasadena City Council in October 2020 and the city is now eligible to apply for other funding sources to support execution of the plan components, for example, Texas Parks and Wildlife funding. Plus, the city has a road map and community-supported recommendations for park and recreation improvement. This was all thanks to a generous grant from the Houston Endowment who supported the development of the Pasadena Healthy Parks Plan, and a portion of the grant was matched by Pasadena Vibrant Community.

Impact

- **2 playgrounds** built at Red Bluff and Gardens Parks, serving the surrounding community
- **285 unique individuals** participated in adult recreation and exercise programs at six new locations, which are now available as ongoing offerings through the Parks and Recreation Department
- **Conducted extensive surveys and assessments** to develop the Pasadena Healthy Parks Plan, the first City Council approved plan in 20 years

We want all our residents to have access to parks and green spaces — whether it is for exercise, quiet reflection or quality time with family and friends.

Jeff Wagner
Mayor of Pasadena
PASADENA VIBRANT COMMUNITY IMPACT

Pasadena Vibrant Community is helping to make Pasadena a healthier community, a movement that will be sustained by the many partners that came together to do this work. 90% of the interventions funded through Pasadena Vibrant Community were completed or sustained by the collaborating organization.

“...These initiatives not only impacted the students and staff members of Pasadena ISD, but they impacted the families who live in the City of Pasadena. The programs were accessible to the community, especially those who may not have had initial access or resources in the past.

Pasadena Vibrant Community Steering Committee member

Key Outcomes

Increased knowledge of healthy behaviors

- 55% of participants in Memorial Hermann Community Benefit Corporation’s diabetes classes reported increased knowledge of healthy behaviors
- 67% of staff trained in Safe Routes to School reported increased knowledge about active transportation to school
- Students throughout PISD reported an increase in the health beliefs scale agreement, indicating belief in the positive benefits of action to eat healthfully and engage in regular physical activity

Increased healthy food consumption

- Families participating in the Brighter Bites program reported:
  - Increased frequency of vegetable and fruit consumption
  - Increased frequency of cooking meals from scratch per week
  - Children reported decreased frequency of sugar-sweetened beverage and regular soda consumption per week
- 920,022 pounds were distributed to families through Brighter Bites

Decreased BMI

- 34% of Vibrant Lives program participants at PISD achieved clinically significant weight loss
And, the collaborative built through Pasadena Vibrant Community, on the foundation of evidence-based interventions carried out by organizations collaborating together, will continue to support healthy outcomes across Pasadena. Starting in fall of 2020 through summer of 2021 the City of Pasadena Parks and Recreation Department progressively assumed the role of coordinating organization for the Pasadena Vibrant Community Steering Committee. Participants were invited from the Healthy Living Matters Pasadena Community Task Force as well as the broader community. The new initiative is called Partnership for a Healthy Pasadena.

The city convenes the group bi-monthly with the goal of continued collaboration, communication and commitment among member organizations to carry on cultivating a culture of health across Pasadena. In an annual stakeholder survey of the Steering Committee, the top reasons for having a coalition focused on health in Pasadena were coordinating efforts on a regular basis, working together to achieve a common goal, and mobilizing resources; the City of Pasadena is proud to support these efforts formally into the future.

**Increased access to physical activity**
- 2 tracks, 7 crosswalks and 4 playgrounds were built impacting 2,730 children and even more residents in the surrounding neighborhoods
- 6 new types of exercise classes are now offered by the Parks and Recreation Department

**Increased physical activity**
- 46 more minutes of physical activity on average per week for program participants in Vibrant Lives programs
- 12% increase in lesson time spent in moderate to vigorous physical activity for after school programs (40% to 62%)
- Increased mean number of days per week that students engaged in moderate to vigorous physical activity for at least 30 minutes (2.7 to 2.9 days per week), and played outdoors for 30 minutes or more (2.2 to 2.5 days per week)

"Pasadena Vibrant Community initiative is a replicable model of how private-public-community collaboration can support innovative strategies that empower residents to manage their health and improve wellness outcomes that help neighborhoods thrive."

Frazier Wilson
Shell USA Company Foundation