



**COMMUNITY CONTEXT ASSESSMENT (CCA)
FINAL REPORT
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH –
MONROE COUNTY**

JULY 23, 2024

Our mission is to be the source of unbiased health and quality of life data and analysis; the preferred partner for quality program planning, management, evaluation, and community services; the facilitator of collaboration and partnerships in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties; and the trusted champion for ethical and targeted healthcare policy at the local, state, and national levels.

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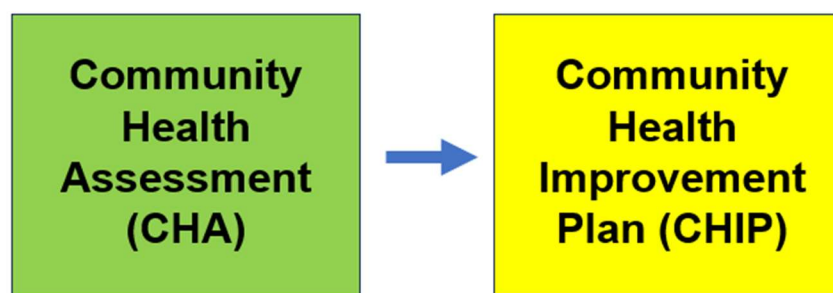
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INTRODUCTION

Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

Assessing our community's health, well-being, and quality of life is one of the essential functions of public health. In Florida, each county health department gathers community partners together every 5 years to conduct a comprehensive community health assessment (CHA) in order to better understand the challenges facing our community and also to better utilize and align our strengths and assets. The CHA allows FDOH and our partnering agencies to create a snapshot of the health and quality of life of Monroe County residents at a given point in time. This CHA process involves several methods of data collection and analysis that will help identify the top health issues in Monroe. Once complete, the assessment results will eventually lead to the creation of a community-based strategic plan, known as a community health improvement plan (CHIP), to address these issues (see Figure 1 below).



Gathering of Data → Determination of Goals → Mobilization of Community

Figure 1. Infographic of goals and activities of the Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) processes (adapted from CHA website of Sedgwick County, Kansas).

Many of our partners have played a major role in developing and making progress on the priorities established in the last cycle. For reference, the previous CHIP cycle established the following 3 health priorities:

1. Health in All Policies
2. Mental Health and Substance Abuse
3. Access to Health

MAPP 2.0

Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) is the framework used for the previous CHIP cycle (2019-2024). The MAPP framework, which facilitates the CHA process, has been recently revised to streamline the process, resulting in MAPP 2.0. This streamlined process consists of 3 phases: Building the Community Health Improvement Foundation, (Phase 1), Telling the Community Story (Phase 2), and Continuously Improving the Community (Phase 3). The MAPP 2.0 framework is a continual process, as we will continue to check in with our community using this process every 5 years. Currently, we are in Phase 2, or telling the community story (see Figure 2 below).

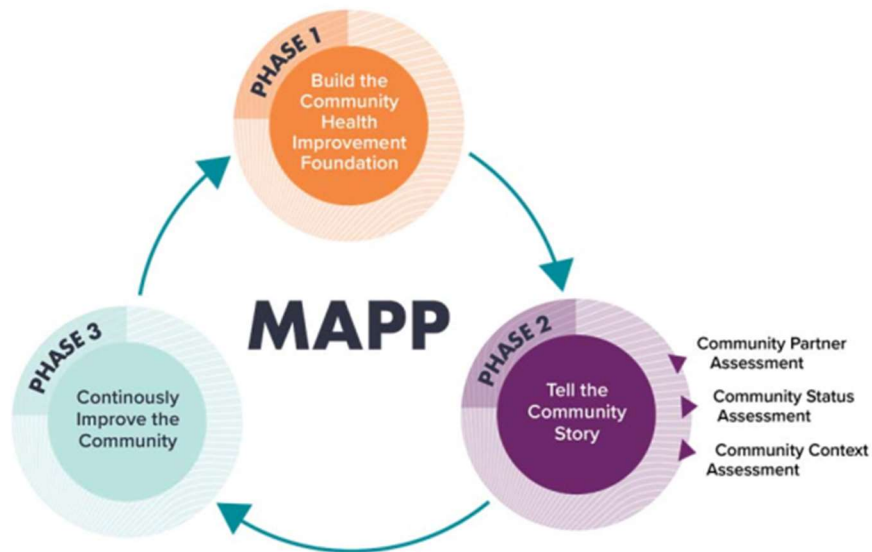


Figure 2. Summary diagram of MAPP 2.0 process (Source: NACCHO MAPP 2.0 User's Handbook)

Phase 2 of MAPP 2.0

During Phase 2, a total of 3 assessments are completed: 1) the Community Partner Assessment (CPA), which seeks to describe the capacity of our community partner network to support a CHA/CHIP process; 2) the Community Status Assessment (CSA), which utilizes quantitative data methods (e.g., surveys, publicly-available data) to describe the status of health and quality of life among Monroe County residents; and 3) the Community Context Assessment (CCA), which utilizes qualitative data methods (e.g. focus groups, key informant interviews) to describe the context surrounding the health and quality of life outcomes in Monroe.

Community Context Assessment (CCA)

The CCA seeks to address the following questions:

- What strengths and resources does the community have that support health and well-being?
- What current and historical forces of change locally, regionally, and globally shape political, economic, and social conditions for community members?
- What physical and cultural assets are in the built environment? How do those vary by neighborhood?
- What is the community doing to improve health outcomes? What solutions has the community identified to improve community health?

METHODOLOGY

To recruit participants for the CCA focus groups, DOH-Monroe posted public notices on social media describing the opportunity. Interested community members provided their meeting availability, contact information and demographic data. Given that community residents are spread out across Monroe County’s 120 miles, residents could participate either virtually on Zoom or in person at the DOH-Monroe conference room, where the in-person group would then Zoom in together. A total of three CCA focus group meetings were held, with a total of 29 total participants across all groups (10 participants during Session 1, held on May 29, 2024; 6 participants during Session 2, held during June 4, 2024; and 13 participants during Session 3, held on June 6, 2024) (see Table 1 for overall demographics of participants). Each focus group lasted for approximately one hour. The sessions were facilitated by HCSF staff members and focused on the following overall topics: Strengths and assets of Monroe County, the neighborhood and built environment, and forces of change.

Each focus group session was audiorecorded. The audiorecordings were transcribed and analyzed qualitatively in Nvivo 12. Common themes across the focus groups within each category of interest (Strengths and Assets, Neighborhood and Built Environment, and Forces of Change) were noted and are detailed in Table 2. Specific quotes from the focus groups that capture overarching themes are also noted in Table 2.

RESULTS

Demographics

Participants completed questionnaires prior to focus group participation on various demographic items. The overall results for these demographics are shown in Tables 1-8. Of note, the vast majority (nearly 76%) of participants were from Key West (Table 1). Additionally, participants largely represented the 65+ age group (41.4%) and the 55-64 age group (27.6%; Table 2). The majority of participants were female (75.9%; Table 3), employed (75.9%; Table 4), White (72.4%; Table 5), non-Hispanic (79.3%; Table 6), and participating in person (62.1%; Table 8). Nearly a quarter of the participants (24.1%) had a 4-year college degree, with nearly half of participants (48.3%) with more than a 4-year degree (Table 7).

Table 1. Residence of Participants

Location	n	%
Key West	22	75.9%
Lower Keys (Stock Island to Big Pine Key)	3	10.3%
Middle Keys (Bahia Honda to Long Key)	2	6.9%
Upper Keys (Layton to Key Largo)	2	6.9%
Total	29	100.0%

Table 2. Age of Participants

Age	n	%
25-34	1	3.4%
35-44	2	6.9%
45-54	6	20.7%
55-64	8	27.6%
65+	12	41.4%
Total	29	100.0%

Table 3. Sex of Focus Group Participants

Sex	n	%
Female	22	75.9%
Male	7	24.1%
Total	29	100.0%

Table 4. Employment Status of Participants

Employment	n	%
No	6	20.7%
Yes	22	75.9%
No Response	1	3.4%
Total	29	100.0%

Table 5. Race of Participants

Race	n	%
Asian	1	3.4%
Black or African American	5	17.2%
Multirace	2	6.9%
White	21	72.4%
Total	29	100.0%

Table 6. Ethnicity of Participants

Ethnicity	n	%
Hispanic	5	17.2%
Non-Hispanic	23	79.3%
No Response	1	3.4%
Total	29	100.0%

Table 7. Educational Attainment of Participants

Educational Attainment	n	%
College 4 Years or More	7	24.1%
High School/GED	4	13.8%
More than 4 Year Degree	14	48.3%
Some College or Trade School	4	13.8%
Total	29	100.0%

Table 8. Method of Participation

Method of Participation	n	%
In Person	18	62.1%
Via Zoom	11	37.9%
Total	29	100.0%

Qualitative Findings by Category

This section highlights the overarching themes identified across all sessions within each category (Strengths and Assets, Neighborhood and Built Environment, and Forces of Change). For each category, a table presents the themes identified, along with a description of the theme (including current strengths), potential opportunities for growth and improvement, and notable quotations from sessions related to each theme.

Strengths and Assets

The first section of the focus group sessions included questions on overall community strengths and assets. Specifically, community members in each session were asked the following questions:

- What strengths and resources do community members have?
- How can these strengths and resources be used to improve community health?
 - *Additional questions if time allowed – not asked in every session*
 - What is a key health issue that you or your community has experienced?
 - How can these community skills and resources be used to improve other health issues?

Table 9 details the overarching themes identified in this category, namely, community cohesion, community outreach efforts and inter-organizational cohesion, and availability of resources.

Neighborhood and Built Environment

The second section of the focus group sessions included questions on the neighborhood and built environment. Specifically, community members in each session were asked the following questions:

- What physical strengths and resources exist in the built environment of your community?
- How do these resources differ across neighborhoods, particularly in those experiencing the greatest health inequities?
- How do community members view and interact with their local built environment?
- How do these interactions impact the health of community members?
 - *Additional questions if time allowed – not asked in every session*
 - What makes your neighborhood great?
 - What are things that make your neighborhood feel unsafe, unwelcoming, or inaccessible?

Table 10 details the overarching themes identified in this category: accessibility; public spaces; pedestrian, biker, and driver safety; transportation; road conditions; and housing conditions.

Forces of Change

The third and final section of the focus group sessions included questions on forces of change. Specifically, community members in each session were asked the following questions:

- What events may be occurring or might occur that affect the health of your community or your local public health system?
- How do these forces of change impact your communities, especially those with barriers to social and economic resources?
- What are the accommodations for environmental concerns that are already happening or might happen for this community?
 - *Additional question if time allowed – not asked in every session*
 - What barriers or events might keep you or anyone in your community from being healthy?

Table 11 details the overarching themes identified in this category, namely, health care, mental health/substance abuse, tourism and respect for community values, economic stability, tourism and the local economy, environmental conditions, and cultural diversity and language barriers.

Table 9: Strengths and Assets: Overarching Themes

Overarching Theme	Description	Opportunities for Growth and Improvement	Notable Quotations
Community Cohesion	There is a spirit of care among community, with members described as looking out for one another.		<p>“There’s a tremendous love in this community and passion for where we live, and we do try to help each other.”</p> <p>“There’s a warmth and an openness here as a whole that makes people empathic and supportive of each other.”</p> <p>“It’s a small island and everybody knows everybody. So, everybody knows who to ask for what.”</p>
Community Outreach Efforts and Inter-Organizational Cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similar to the community as a whole, organizations are described as being very tightly knit with one another and working together to help their target populations Current outreach efforts include conducting health fairs/in-person events in vulnerable communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some participants stated that inter-organizational communication could be better to lead to more effective service delivery (e.g., holding periodic meetings among community organizations to keep all parties aware of what is being offered in the community) Services may be duplicated among partners, which can lead to inefficiencies as well as competition for the limited amount of funding available 	<p>“We have an organization...that currently, at least twice a month, goes into minority communities up and down the Keys. And I think it would be great if the health department and the Monroe County Coalition could...partner together and find the funds to maybe [do this] more than twice a month, maybe four times a month. And...when we do this, we have people from the Alzheimer’s Society, from the Guidance Care Clinic, Mental Health Society, AHEC—we have all of these providers, and they are so willing to come out when we have one of these meetings and they come out and talk to the minority communities. They give them information about how to access services, and then the bonus is when we advertise for this, we tell them the first 25 people get a \$75 gift card for Publix, and we’re going to raffle off a \$275 Amazon gift card, and we’re going to provide some refreshments. So...I think we need to partner, pull our resources together, get this information out to people.”</p>
Availability of Resources	A wide variety of community organizations in Monroe County offer assistance with health care and human services; these organizations often work closely with each other and with their clients and are very knowledgeable about	<p>Many community members do not know about these resources, especially those who may be able to benefit the most (e.g., low-income residents, older adults, immigrant/ELL populations). <u>It is critical to identify more effective ways of educating the community on available resources.</u></p> <p>Ways of getting the word out more effectively:</p>	<p>“I think we are leaving people [behind] that need more of the services...when everything has to be done through a phone with internet. When we have a big population that cannot afford internet, that just try to connect to any Wi-Fi they find...they don’t necessarily understand or speak or write English.”</p> <p>“...it used to be that you had a print newspaper, and you may have a US one...those were the communication channels that everybody listened to. Now, with...different channels of information, it’s hard to get the word to</p>

	<p>available resources in the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educating the community on a <u>consistent</u> basis through multiple channels, including social media, email, and internet • For non-tech users, continue sharing information <u>consistently</u> through newspapers, radio, TV, word-of-mouth, and in-person community outreach events (e.g., health fairs) within vulnerable communities • Use incentives to increase event attendance (e.g., free food, child care, gift card raffles) • Consider seeking out expert advice on how to share information more effectively with community members • Consider having a more streamlined and organized method of sharing information about community resources and events (e.g., a dedicated website for this purpose) 	<p>everybody. And perhaps one of the things that we could do is get some expert advice on how to do the reaching out.”</p> <p>“We do community events...we mostly go to minority neighborhoods...but the whole community really needs to know that these services are for them too. And so we're working on better communication.”</p> <p>“We do have a lot of strengths. We do have a lot of resources in our community. They are a little bit scattered. And I don't think that there's a lot of information. Well, there's too much information. It's really what it is. So it needs to come together.” – organization of informational dissemination needed</p>
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Table 10: Neighborhood and Built Environment: Overarching Themes

Overarching Theme	Description	Opportunities for Growth and Improvement	Notable Quotations
Accessibility	Efforts have been made to enhance accessibility (e.g., sidewalks, ramps) throughout the community, particularly in Key West, for all community members.	Continued enhancements to existing structures to increase accessibility would benefit the community.	<p>“In Key West, upgrading sidewalks, creating entrances and parking...for wheelchairs and ramps, and things like that [have been done recently]. Parks have been upgraded; the public pools have been upgraded to assist the certain aspect of the community that they needed [to assist]. And so, I can give you that as a strength.”</p> <p>“A lot of sidewalks are now sloping down so there is no bump down, so you basically have it available for people in wheelchairs or on bicycles, [as they] can easily get on the side of them...I definitely see that [the city is] working on...making the sidewalks more accessible for bicycles, or strollers, or whatever.”</p>
Public Spaces	Many improvements have been made in the City of Key West, including the Crosstown Greenway, Staples Pedestrian Bridge replacement, and a general increasing focus on Complete Streets. In addition, multiple upgrades have been made in Key West and throughout the county to local parks and bicycle trails. Participants discussed how these features contribute to more outdoor activities and can foster greater community and social interaction among residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater regulation is needed to address a lack of cleanliness of public spaces (e.g., waste on the streets from chickens that get fed by members of the population; no regulation around animal feeding or cleanup, which can contaminate living spaces) • Built environment upgrades have been made in parts of Monroe County, but not all; certain areas (often lower-income areas) have fewer sidewalks and safe spaces to walk (e.g., parts of Key West, larger portions of unincorporated Monroe County, e.g., Key Largo) • A more consistent presence of artwork (e.g., murals and poetry), as well as sidewalks, in public spaces would make them feel more inviting • More indoor activities for families would be welcomed, as well as more family-friendly events (e.g., festivals, educational events) 	<p>“The improvements that they've made at the parks lately are tremendous and very much needed [and] much appreciated.”</p> <p>“The bicycle trails...help a lot of people create groups, go out...I think that's a very positive thing here.”</p> <p>“The parks really contribute to [connection among community members], and there's usually events...[that have] made a difference for the neighbors there.”</p> <p>“I've been in Bahama Village and there are many streets...that are so very narrow with cars parking on each side...there's no sidewalk.”</p> <p>“It's really hard for the families...that there's no indoor spaces for children. Everything is outside...we want to interact, we want to do things, but it then gets to a point where it's just too hot. Can we have something that is indoors, so that the community is getting shared, so that we can play, so that we can be productive...instead of always being outside?”</p>

		that unite multiple segments of the community)	
Pedestrian, Bike, and Driver Safety	The City of Key West is making more efforts to make the area more bike-friendly, such as the creation of more bike parking and bike lanes. Planners are continually developing and refining ways of making streets as safe as possible for all road users (including drivers, bikers, pedestrians).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-bikes considered dangerous by many drivers, pedestrians, and bikers, and there is concern about the seemingly low level of regulation of them • Greater regulation is needed to enforce safety rules (e.g., helmet use, reduced speed limits) for all road users (bikers, drivers, pedestrians, users of e-bikes, etc.) • Drivers feel frustrated with having to share the road with bikers • Residents feel there should be more one-way streets for greater safety of pedestrians and drivers • Greater awareness of safety education and available community resources (e.g., free bike helmets) is needed for all road users 	<p>"I appreciate the improvement with the roads, but we still do have a gigantic traffic problem. There's all kinds of vehicles here...bikes, scooters, electric cars, delivery trucks, propane trucks...wheelchairs, and everybody's trying to get along here...and I think maybe we need a little more regulation."</p> <p>"The electric bikes are very, very dangerous because we don't even know what speed they're going or if they're a biker or a car."</p> <p>"The health department...hands out helmets, so...[it] would help for the police department to really enforce [wearing] helmets, not just the bikers but the people on mopeds...[there would be] less trauma on the street."</p> <p>"People coming onto the island or visitors are speeding. Taxicabs are racing randomly. It just makes it really dangerous for anybody who's local just to even ride their bike or safely get anywhere."</p> <p>"We...need to work out something where the reduction of the speed is being enforced. So we can reduce the speed, but if there isn't enough enforcement to ensure that...you're going to get a ticket or there's going to be a consequence of violation...we're back to square one."</p> <p>"...because of the way Key West is and how small the roads are, there should be more one-way streets."</p>
Transportation	Resources are available for transportation within Monroe County and even outside of Monroe into Miami-Dade County (e.g., Guidance Care Center, Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Key West Department of Transportation). Furthermore, public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many residents (especially those who are older or lower in income) may need help with transportation to Miami-Dade County for healthcare issues, but may be unaware of available options • Residents may be unaware of bus routes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Greater community education is needed to inform residents of transportation options 	<p>"...people can get a bus pass, which is good for 30 days...we give bus passes to our clients, so I don't know if something can be made [available] through the health department and your social service office for seniors or people who are on fixed income or low income...they have a county bus pass that'll take you from mile marker zero to mile marker 105...there are bus schedules along with that. I don't know if we need to educate people on how to use the bus schedules...but we do have some services available. We</p>

	<p>transportation in Key West is accessible via Key West Rides On-Demand mobile app.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For non-tech users, other options for securing transportation should be made publicly available through other informational channels (e.g., newspaper, radio, TV, word-of-mouth, in-person events) • There is a lack of shelters at bus stops, which can be difficult on rainy or hot days when people need covering or shade 	<p>just need to get that information out and help people to be able to access those services.”</p> <p>“You can use the free ride [app], but you have to have a phone and use their app. A lot of my guys don't have their phones, and their insurance and loan benefits are ending the end of this month. So that makes riding the bus very difficult for a lot of my people.”</p> <p>“[The] elderly...are limited with driving and just transportation anywhere—to the doctor, to the mainland or around here, shopping, grocery shopping, and so on.”</p> <p>“There are a lot of transportation [options] available that bring [residents] from point A to point B. But knowing a few residents, they pay up to \$300 a trip just to take them to Miami...that's how much they're paying.”</p>
<p>Road Conditions</p>	<p>The City of Key West is working on road and sidewalk improvements (e.g., adding in one-way streets, repaving damaged roads).</p>	<p>Some neighborhoods (typically in more affluent areas) are undergoing more road improvements than other neighborhoods.</p>	<p>“[In] Key West...we see the same roads being repaved over and over and over again, but there's other neighborhoods that have yet to experience one repaving or putting in new pumps to get the water out of the neighborhood and some are without adequate sidewalks...”</p>
<p>Housing Conditions</p>	<p>Several participants described unsafe building conditions of many housing rental units, with an apparent lack of oversight or attention from landlords. Many renters do not want to risk losing their housing, so they do not report these issues. These unsafe conditions can have negative effects on residents' health.</p>	<p>Greater regulation of housing conditions is needed, with greater accountability among landlords to maintain the safety and functionality of properties in compliance with local codes.</p>	<p>“Many [residents] report [that they] don't have a decent place to live. They live in very bad conditions and [there is] a connection with the health.”</p> <p>“The conditions of...the Stock Island area [and] some of the homes here in Key West that are rented [are] terrible. I have seen houses with issues with the roof that they refuse for years to fix...unsafe flooring...how are you allowed to rent a place in that condition? And that's where families live...at least it should be kept functional and safe...most of the time, [people] know if they go on complaining, the [landlord] is going to know and they're going to lose the place. So people...basically put up with it...but [there] should be a process for [a rental property] to be inspected...to be functional and safe. And we're raising babies in [these] places.”</p>

Table 11: Forces of Change: Overarching Themes

Overarching Theme	Description	Opportunities for Growth and Improvement	Notable Quotations
Health Care	<p>Participants discussed the lack of health care providers available in Monroe County, both primary care and specialists. When they are able to obtain care, there is often a long wait time to see a physician. Furthermore, they did not consider health providers in the area to be high in quality. Plus, Monroe County does not have the health facilities to handle more severe issues and emergencies. As a result, Monroe County residents must often travel to Miami-Dade County for healthcare, which can be both inconvenient and costly.</p> <p>However, community organizations have attempted to address these challenges over time, with several (e.g., AHEC, Rural Health Network) providing no-/low-cost primary, dental and/or maternity care to Monroe County residents at various sites throughout the county (including in schools). Additionally, several community providers (both primary care and dental care) deploy mobile units to travel to various locations within Monroe County to accommodate residents who may not be able to travel for care.</p>	<p>Suggested areas for growth include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued use of mobile units (e.g., buses) to provide health care services to underserved communities Conversion of unused building spaces into satellite health facilities (e.g., primary care clinic that operates even a few days a week) Greater education of community members to build health literacy, including knowledge of what health resources are available (e.g., community health options, telehealth, help with insurance) in their communities and issues affecting the availability of health care 	<p>“We don't have a cancer center That means sick people are driving [to the mainland for care].”</p> <p>“Even general practitioners, I mean, they're running thin [there are a limited number of them].”</p> <p>“The quality of health care is really bad [in Monroe County], and if you're really sick, you go to the hospital, then you got to [go to] Miami, and you can be lucky, hopefully, by the grace of God, you get there...I think...we come back to the same issue: dollars and cents.”</p> <p>“We need more doctors. It takes two months to get in to see a doctor.”</p> <p>“Health literacy is a big part of [health care], and [we need] to make that available, whether it's in a pamphlet form or a workshop form or just [word-of-mouth]....so educating the population on what we can do [and] what we can't do as a rural, remote area...health literacy [includes], how do you pick a PCP? What is available and what's not available?”</p> <p>“I got this document [in the] mail, that said, "Teledoc," and it was free. It's like, "Oh my gosh, this one envelope with the information inside that I didn't throw away...It has become a life changer to be able to have this support..."there's just multiple ways of reaching people.”</p> <p>“With mental health resources for children, this county is despicable. It is despicable that having somebody online zoomed in for an appointment to check to see if your kid's okay on the medication they start on and then not show up...that's astounding to me. That should not happen. That is not fair to families who work really hard to be here. That needs to change.”</p>

<p>Mental Health/Substance Abuse</p>	<p>Residents in Monroe County are juggling multiple life stressors, many of which are related to the high cost of living and overwork, which may predispose them to finding less healthy ways of coping (e.g., drugs/alcohol abuse). Unfortunately, relatively few facilities in Monroe County can help residents struggling with substance abuse. There are a few inpatient treatment centers, but once patients are discharged, there are fewer resources for ongoing recovery.</p>	<p>Participants focused on the need to establish better social and workplace infrastructures to better support residents so that they do not have to spend so much time working while also being able to afford basic necessities. Otherwise, the rigorous work schedules and financial stress of living in Monroe County will have continuing negative effects on residents' mental and physical health.</p> <p>More facilities are needed to help individuals with substance abuse issues and other mental health needs with ongoing, longer-term recovery. Participants mentioned examples from other communities of successful models where patients contributed to the upkeep and maintenance of the facility as they during their recovery time there, suggesting that such a model could perhaps be implemented in Monroe County.</p>	<p>"We live in a beautiful place and we can't enjoy it because we're too busy stressing about 'How are we going to do this?'"</p> <p>"You're going to lose all the people that have the capacity to even [go] on [at this pace], they get to a point where they're like, I'm done. And then, the problems continue with the people that remain and have to pick the slack and are stressed...there's a lot of stress, and stress does create medical – not just mental – but medical issues...which, then we don't have the providers...and it just spirals out into a whole thing."</p> <p>"[Workers are] struggling so much that [they use] drugs and alcohol [to cope] because they're maxed out...they're picking up the slack."</p> <p>"Some people...pick up drugs and alcohol and just get overwhelmed with life. There needs to be somewhere for them to go to get on track...and it should be a beautiful thing. And they should be able to be helping our community and we should be able to integrate them back into our community, and they're helping us...by doing service of some kind. It's, I've seen it happen in other communities...and I think our community can do it too. I don't understand why we're holding back."</p>
<p>Tourism and Respect for Community Values</p>	<p>Many people (often visitors or tourists) are not respectful of rules, laws, and lifestyle norms in Monroe County that make it a peaceful and habitable place for all (residents and tourists included).</p>	<p>Participants suggested that greater enforcement of laws and regulations is critical to promoting long-term community well-being, in terms of maintenance of physical areas and peaceful lifestyle of residents.</p>	<p>"People need to know this is a city, and we have respect and we have rules and this is our home...we're willing to share it. We love our tourists. We love people. We'd love to show everybody around...but we do have a community that we need to have respect."</p> <p>"...we have jobs, we have schedules... not everybody is living the same lifestyle. A lot of people have multiple jobs, so people sleep in the day, neighbors have to be respectful of playing the music in the middle of the night...we need to be considerate of each other and respectful."</p>

			<p>"We put out a Fantasy Fest, and some people like it, a lot of local people participate, that's all good, but there still needs to be some respect. You don't come down here and, you know, just do whatever you want."</p>
Economic Stability	<p>Economic stability for individual residents and families in Monroe County encompasses multiple issues, chief among which are cost of living and housing. In particular, the cost of living is too high for many residents, often requiring them to work multiple jobs to make ends meet. This is particularly the case among workers in the service industry and lower-wage jobs.</p> <p>Compounding this struggle is the scarcity of housing in Monroe County, and particularly affordable housing for lower-income workers. Given these factors, participants noted that many residents are leaving Monroe County due to being overwhelmed by these economic stressors. As such, several noted a difficulty recruiting competent employees for jobs in Monroe County, especially those with the professional background needed to address these very planning-related challenges. Additionally, with a limited supply of workers, existing employees are often overworked and do not have adequate support or backup if they need time off, which takes a</p>	<p>Participants underscored the need for more affordable housing for workers, given that some of the most essential workers (e.g., police officers, teachers) are struggling to find affordable housing in Monroe County.</p> <p>Housing specific to the needs of older adults is also greatly needed, as the population ages and the families of many older residents live far away.</p> <p>Overall, greater supports are critical to maintain a healthy workforce and overall community (e.g., a living wage, time off to prevent burnout, which may help with longer-term retention of the workforce in Monroe County).</p> <p>Participants also noted the unique struggles of the ALICE (Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed) population, who are above the Federal Poverty Line but still struggle to make ends meet in a community with a high cost of living such as Monroe County. In particular, they stressed the importance of local organizations raising caps on income requirements to obtain services (e.g., affordable housing, medical) so they could continue to pursue upward mobility without losing critical necessities, such as their homes.</p>	<p>Cost of living: "We're getting priced out of our island...we can't live here and people don't want to come visit [due to the cost]."</p> <p>Overtaxing of current workforce: "...because people are leaving, the people that remain have to pick up the slack because the employers maybe don't have the resources to rehire their position or there isn't anyone. And so that these people are being maxed out, but they're not necessarily being potentially compensated or given the time they need to re-group...there's like all these fissures, these cracks in the foundational structure of the people that make this whole system work here, for people to come visit, for the stores to work, the restaurants, the schools, etc., etc., and then what? Like, that person gets sick and can't go to work and then you have this whole [problem]...we're all connected. We're the people, you have to care of people. And so [we have to figure] out how we can build that infrastructure so that everybody's taken care of."</p> <p>Challenges in recruiting workers: "The city of Key West has a multi-modal coordinator...who's working on transportation...but there's a lot of work for just one person to do all that...[and] with us being a remote coastal community, a lot of times having the right people [with the necessary] educational background and professional experience to come in...be able to find housing...there's all those challenges [involved]."</p> <p>Affordable housing: "In the Bahama Village area...there was a huge build-up in the community, one with community support for affordable housing, and when the final sale was given on who would be the developer, he had the prices of a unit so jacked up no one can afford to live there, and that small community feels, once again,</p>

	<p>toll on their physical and mental health over time.</p>	<p>that this has been taken from them...the people who are needing affordable housing [are] left out again.”</p> <p>“If we don't have low-income housing and workforce housing for low-income people down here, we are going to lose our values and our own identity as a community.”</p> <p>“It's at the point where it's difficult for our police officers, our firefighters, and our school teachers to find places to stay. Now, if those factors aren't addressed, you have no sense of community.”</p> <p>“Where are those workers going to live? How are we going to run all these big hotels [that are] very profitable, all these nice restaurants? ... the dishwasher, the people that clean, that cook, that serve them...are running out of options here too.”</p> <p>“And then there's the elderly, all of us who are aging and not knowing what we're going to do or where we're going to go because there's not a lot of resources in our community for this age.”</p> <p>ALICE population: “...you end up in the [ALICE] (Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed) category, where you work your guts out and you still end up with nothing because...you've edged yourself over that point of getting government support, but you're still down here. And so at the end of the day, you still are trying to make it stretch or you're worse off because now you no longer have your resource of time to sort of fill gaps where you can...they look like everything's fine on paper, but they're not fine...they're actually maybe doing worse than they might have been with the government support...And it's getting harder because the cost of living is increasing...and people feel less capable of even taking a moment to figure out what their resources are, so they may feel stuck.”</p> <p>“Everybody thinks [workforce housing] a wonderful idea, but there's a cap on how much you can make. So those of us who want to take on the second job or even ask for a raise are in</p>
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Tourism and Local Economy	<p>Participants noted a lowered sense of community, partly due to greater tourism over time. In particular, an increasing number of vacation rentals have been the place of residential homes. Additionally, some noted that small businesses have been bought out by national companies that are less invested in the community.</p> <p>Overall, participants discussed how the greater prioritization of profits (through a focus on hotels and tourism) is taking away from investments in resources that could enhance community members' health and well-being (e.g., social services, paying employees a living wage).</p>	<p>Participants discussed the need to balance the growth of tourism with maintenance of quality of life for residents, noting that a strong infrastructure of workers is a prerequisite for a successful tourism industry. Some suggested putting some revenues made from tourism (bed tax) toward community resources and infrastructure.</p>	<p>Vacation rentals decreasing sense of community: "It's all Airbnb and VRBO, and there's no real communities left anymore in Old Town....there really is no sense of community...I mean, I still see people that walk down the street, and I still see people at the grocery store and things, and I'm glad to see them now. But yeah, it's really hard...I'm not so sure that we really have the same kind of community that we used to have..."</p> <p>"I noticed where I live in Old Town, there aren't any people that really live there; so the interaction that I have with my neighbors is for a couple of months at best."</p> <p>Tourism and local community infrastructure: "I think we have public money going into driving the tourism industry here...what the appropriate balance is between...the growth of tourism and quality of life, how [do] we support that tourism with housing and services and everything else? A lot of money goes into advertising to bring [tourists] here. Very little money goes into supporting the infrastructure that makes that possible."</p> <p>"Let's increase our bed tax and channel that money into community resources."</p> <p>"Another facet of this issue of turning into a non-residential community: Many of the local businesses that might have had an interest in maintaining the quality of life for their employees have sold out to national firms who [do not care about us]. It's a dollar and that's the end of it."</p>

<p>Environmental Concerns</p>	<p>Participants voiced concerns about multiple issues related to the environment, including king tides and flooding, water quality, disaster planning, increasing heat exposure, outdoor workers (who are often low-wage workers), greater proliferation of mosquitoes and associated illnesses, and the dying off of coral reefs.</p> <p>Participants voiced the urgency of addressing these environmental issues, particularly the health of the oceans, as they have downstream effects on every other aspect of our health and well-being.</p>	<p>Continued public education is needed about environmental hazards (e.g., king tides, water quality, disaster planning). This info needs to be disseminated through multiple channels to accommodate both tech- and non-tech users.</p> <p>Outdoor workers are particularly susceptible to heat-related and mosquito-borne illnesses; therefore, greater protections need to be conferred upon these workers to promote their health and well-being.</p> <p>More educational efforts are needed on the degradation of these natural resources and the effects of climate change on our natural environment.</p>	<p>“There’s also an issue with those king tides and the flooding, which has to do with the quality of water and the residue that’s left behind. And people [can] get illnesses from these tidal pools.”</p> <p>“As a coastal community, there is storm surge, hurricanes, there are weather events, and then there is increased heat, causing strokes, other illnesses. There is a low-income community that, you know, a lot of times only get the jobs to work outdoors that are a lot more exposed to that heat, and then [they] get sick. And due to the heat and flooding, we also get a lot of diseases. There’s a lot more mosquitoes...all that comes under the umbrella [of] climate change that I feel definitely affects public health.”</p> <p>“Five percent of the reef is alive...if you go on your phone to check the water quality of the beaches, the E.coli is awful.”</p> <p>“Our day -to -day reality hinges on what’s going on with the health of our ocean, and it’s not looking good, so the cascade effect of that is coming...I don’t think that we have the time or the luxury to have too many focus groups. I think that somebody needs to go tap on the doors of the people with the dollars and the government and policy legislation...it needs to happen now. It can’t be a project that’s going to be three years down the road.”</p> <p>“I know that the Department [of Health] also does a lot of work and puts stuff together, but does everybody know to go to their website to search what they’re saying about this that or the other thing? So it comes back down to resources and access to resources.”</p>
<p>Cultural Diversity and Language Barriers</p>	<p>Monroe County has an increasing population of immigrants and English-language-learning (ELL) residents. This cultural diversity enriches the depth and breadth of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to share information about English language classes offered at FKCC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use multiple channels of sharing this information 	<p>“We celebrate the one human family...but we are starting to separate into these little communities on this little, tiny island. And I don’t like seeing that happen.”</p>

	<p>perspectives among Monroe County residents, which, as shown in the Key West motto “One Human Family”, is appreciated and embraced by the community.</p> <p>At the same time, participants noted that this diversity can present challenges, as some immigrant communities may be hesitant to assimilate with the larger community population due to discomfort, distrust, or difficulty communicating in a language other than their native one. Additionally, for ELL workers who are employed, language barriers can present challenges in their ability to communicate with coworkers and employers.</p>	<p>(tech/social media-based and print media/word-of-mouth)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Make these classes more accessible (e.g., ensure these classes are available during hours when residents may not be working, consider whether childcare might be available to assist) ● Continue community inclusion efforts to further build trust and camaraderie between newer immigrant residents and the larger Monroe County communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., family-friendly community events, health fairs in minority communities ● Consider promoting meetups between native English speakers and native Spanish/Creole speakers who want to learn each other’s language – perhaps a conversational practice can be initiated 	<p>“...then there's that systemic thing of non-trust. It just goes on and on, especially with the multicultural neighborhoods that we have. Everybody does things differently...How do you [address] that?”</p> <p>“We need a mutual communication....so I would like to see if we can do better with that...everybody has their own culture. And that's wonderful and we celebrate [that] and...we welcome so many cultures...but we have a culture too, and we need to be integrated so that we can have a community that is communicative and it can help each other in emergencies and in life in general.”</p> <p>“It's also affecting our schools...some [children] are held back because the kids come in that don't speak the language...of the class, and then the whole class gets held up, and it's very, very frustrating for the kids in the school system even...and I think people are afraid to talk about it because it sounds prejudiced or judgmental. But I think people agree...we do need to communicate with each other. And we want to.”</p>
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CONCLUSIONS

Common Themes Across Domains

One theme underlying nearly every other theme that emerged across the focus groups was a lack of knowledge: many residents simply do not know about the resources available to them. Partners frequently revisited the challenge of how to get the word out to residents about the multitude of resources available. A frequently discussed factor in this lack of community awareness was that many residents do not use technology (e.g., smartphones, Internet, computers in general) for various reasons (e.g., lack of tech literacy, cost, preference for other means of obtaining information). Since so much information about community resources and events is shared online and through social media, efforts must continue to be made to disseminate this information through non-digital means, including radio, newspapers, TV, paper brochures, flyers, in-person events, and word-of-mouth.

Another theme common to most topics of discussion was the constant presence of economic life stressors, namely, the high cost of living and lack of affordable housing. These issues impede economic stability, let alone upward mobility, for many Monroe County residents. Furthermore, residents' ability to make ends meet without having to stretch themselves so thinly across multiple jobs is critical to maintaining their physical and mental health. To that end, participants discussed the need for the community to prioritize the health of its workers to maintain an intact workforce infrastructure, which may involve providing a living wage and adequate support at work to prevent burnout.

In a related vein, participants noted the effects of life stressors on mental health, as well as the lack of community resources to help those suffering from substance abuse. Given the widespread nature of mental health concerns, participants highlighted the importance of developing innovative approaches to therapy and recovery. Participants also mentioned the ongoing challenge of access to health care in Monroe County, specifically noting the lack of availability of high-quality health care and the continued need for approaches to work around this challenge (e.g., greater community awareness of available resources, transportation options to Miami-Dade County).

Participants also raised concerns about the effects of tourism on the well-being of community members. Specifically, they advocated for more investment in community resources that would enhance the health and well-being of residents, rather than focusing more exclusively on revenue generation through the tourism industry.

Additional topics of importance to community members were pedestrian/biker/driver safety and environmental concerns. Safety has been deemed critical, particularly in Key West, where many community members prefer to use bikes for transportation; however, many residents seem unaware of proper safety rules governing different modes of transportation. Environmental concerns were raised, particularly regarding increasing heat and flooding, with participants underscoring the importance of educating the community on these issues immediately.

Limitations

While focus group participants represented all locations within Monroe County, residents from Key West were disproportionately represented (comprising over 75% of participants across all focus groups). Therefore, many of the issues raised largely pertain to Key West, while specific issues relevant to other parts of Monroe County may not have been explored in as much depth.

Additionally, the method by which participants engaged in the focus groups may have affected their contributions. In particular, those who participated in person may have been more forthcoming in discussing issues, given the atmosphere of being around others in the same room and likely residing in the same geographical area (Key West). Future efforts to conduct focus groups may benefit from consideration of whether a single method should be used (i.e., either in-person or virtual, but not both).

Next Steps

Since several of the issues raised by participants may be partially addressed through greater community education and awareness of available resources, perhaps the most efficient approach toward addressing these issues is to disseminate information to the public through as many channels as possible, both through electronic media and through print media/in-person. Additionally, community representatives may consider developing a central portal of information for community members to reliably obtain information on available community resources, services, and in-person events. Through addressing these barriers and developing innovative ways to disseminate information to those who need it, organizations may be more successful in getting the word out to community members.