



2018 Annual Report

A Year of Catalytic Partnerships

MetroMorphosis[®]
Transforming Urban Communities from Within

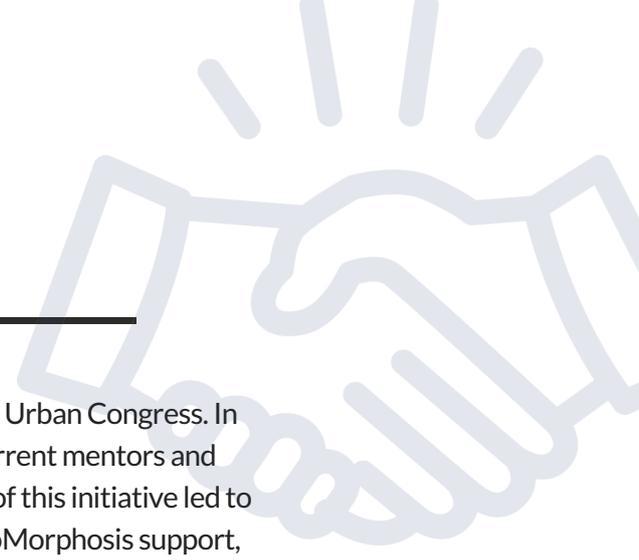
2018 ANNUAL REPORT

At the core of MetroMorphosis' identity is a commitment to the role of catalyst in community change. MetroMorphosis creates the systems and communities necessary to catalyze productive collaboration between government, private business, non-profits, and individuals in the community, and then serves as a 'strategic support organization' to hold those collaborations accountable for sustained effort and measurable progress. The year 2018 has been defined by the creation of these catalytic partnerships.

Because of the work and communities created by MetroMorphosis in 2018, diverse coalitions have been formed to: develop a system to better identify and support students who are at-risk of dropping out from high school, promote mentoring of young men across the city, assess systems related to prison re-entry and identify strategies to improve re-entry outcomes, train and support minority owned businesses to be more competitive for local contracts, and re-purposed barbershops to be both hubs of community change and satellite health facilities focused on blood pressure. In addition, MetroMorphosis' flagship initiative, the Urban Congress for African American Males, where many of these collaborations began, has emerged as the heart of a larger movement around community change that has catalyzed dozens of relationships outside of its formal work that have; allowed delegates who are small business owners to increase their client base, sparked collaborations between non-profit organizations, and created experiences that inspired over 95% of delegates to report that participation in the Urban Congress has resulted in their own personal development.

As all of these initiatives come together, they create a sum that is larger than its parts. They create a movement to strengthen our community from within. And because this is a movement, and not simply a moment in time, we also know that it will take sustained effort. This past year has been marked by significant achievement, and established a solid foundation for the long-term work of this movement. As we embark on 2019, we are excited to work with our partners to build on this foundation. Together we will strengthen our communities by working to realize the hidden potential already held within.

MENTORING BR



MentoringBR was established in January 2018 as a direct result of relationships developed through MetroMorphosis and Goal 1 of the Urban Congress. In January, the Urban Congress conducted a mentoring training for current mentors and community members. Over 700 mentors attended and the success of this initiative led to the creation of the independent coalition MentoringBR. With MetroMorphosis support, the MentoringBR partner organizations have continued to collaborate to share strategies and resources. In September, MentoringBR conducted a joint mentor recruitment effort that led to 42 adults becoming mentors for youth in the community. Research has shown that strong mentors help youth ‘feel better about themselves and to engage in less destructive behaviors toward themselves and others’¹

MentoringBR is still a young initiative and MetroMorphosis will continue to provide strategic support for this coalition as they continue to identify ways to increase capacity. This is a coalition with great potential to bring alignment and momentum to mentoring efforts across the city. It is a partnership that was catalyzed entirely by the work of MetroMorphosis.

700+
MENTORS TRAINED IN 2018

MentoringBR is comprised of:

Big Buddy
Imagination Leads
Youth Oasis
Gardere Initiative
Front Yard Bikes

Baton Rouge Youth Coalition
Destiny: Rock of Escape
100 Black Men
Boys and Girls Club
29:11 Mentorship

2019 Potential

- Providing regular training for member organizations to incorporate new and keep current mentors up to date
- Increase efficiency and alignment of mentoring organizations, and
- Dramatically increase capacity and quantity of mentors through collaborative recruitment and training, which has been identified as the principal priority by MentoringBR leaders

INCREASING GRADUATION RATES: AN EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Conversations that began at Urban Congress led to a collaboration between MetroMorphosis, Istrouma High School, and central office administrators from the East Baton Rouge Parish School System to develop an Early Warning System to identify opportunities for improving graduation outcomes. In recent years, early warning systems have begun to receive attention at the national level and research suggests that these proactive measures are more effective at preventing drop-outs than reactive strategies, which don't get triggered until students begin to show patterns of truancy². There is clear agreement that early warning systems are a 'good idea', but this collaboration is an ideal example of how MetroMorphosis can play the role of a strategic support

organization to hold partners accountable for sustained effort and measurable progress. Because MetroMorphosis pushed for this system to be a priority, Istrouma and EBR administrators, were able to develop an early warning system complete with proactive triggers to identify students, as well as prescribed interventions to provide additional, customized support to those students. In the Fall of 2018, 30 black male students were identified by the system and began receiving interventions. MetroMorphosis is making sure that accountability for the effectiveness of those interventions continues. This process will begin with a joint meeting in January 2019 to review the interventions provided and measurements of their success. Meetings will continue throughout the Spring semester to monitor progress of students. In 2019 we will expand EWS to more schools with priority given to schools in the Innovation Network.

**“WE ARE INCREDIBLY
GRATEFUL TO THE SUPPORT
OF METROMORPHOSIS IN
HELPING US TO DEVELOP
THIS EARLY WARNING
SYSTEM. YOUR PRESENCE
HAS HELPED US BETTER
FOCUS ON THE NEEDS OF
OUR STUDENTS.”**

**– REGINALD DOUGLAS, PRINCIPAL,
ISTROUMA HIGH SCHOOL**

2018 Highlights

- **Development of an early warning system for identifying and flagging youth at-risk of dropping out**
- **Interventions provided to 30 black males who triggered the system**

2019 Potential

- **Increasing the graduation rate among black males at Istrouma**
- **Scaling similar Early Warning Systems to High Schools in the the EBR Innovation Network**

PRISON RE-ENTRY & REDUCING RECIDIVISM



In 2018 MetroMorphosis partnered with the Department of Corrections to conduct an intensive re-entry systems evaluation. This arose as a priority through conversations begun by delegates and community partners at the Urban Congress. The goal of this evaluation is to identify systems and strategies to create a more successful system for re-entry³. A more successful system would mean people who are better able to gain and retain employment and would ultimately lead to a reduced recidivism rate for formerly incarcerated citizens⁴. In 2018, investigations focused on the 100 hour pre-release component of the re-entry process. This investigation consisted primarily in interviewing Department of Corrections personnel and preparing a set of recommendations to strengthen the pre-release phase of the re-entry system based on those conversations.

Primary Findings include:

- A need to increase skill training available to pre-release students as well as an emphasis on a quality control for the training provided. This quality control will need to include a focus on relevant and up to date curriculum as well as effective instructors.
- A need for more mentors and people who have successfully re-entered to speak to the Students/Offenders participating in the 100-hr Pre-Release program to present specific strategies and mindsets for a successful and sustainable re-entry.

The next phase of the assessment to begin in early 2019 will focus on interviewing recently released persons and re-entry service providers.

2018 Highlights

- Interviews with re-entry staff at two Louisiana Correctional Facilities in the city, one parish facility and one state facility, have resulted in concrete recommendations for improving the 100 hour pre-release phase of the re-entry system

2019 Potential

- Further investigation into the effectiveness of the Pre-Release Program by interviewing formerly incarcerated individuals of a variety of ages and release times
- Interviews with reentry service providers in order to identify ways to best serve the newly released.
- A revamped system for re-entry that better prepares and supports citizens for life after incarceration and ultimately reduces recidivism rates for those previously incarcerated

RE-PURPOSED BARBERSHOPS

Barbershops have long been social centers of urban communities. Now MetroMorphosis is working with more than 20 barbershops across the city to transform them into centers of civic engagement and community change. This initiative is part of MetroMorphosis' ongoing efforts to mobilize community members around positive change. While the Urban Congress is the flagship program for this effort, conversations in the community led to the realization that many individuals did not feel entirely comfortable at Urban Congress gatherings where conversations are often driven by Director level professionals and elected officials. This led MetroMorphosis to explore ways to create satellite Urban Congress style gatherings at different locations around the city. Barber shops proved to be an effective venue where committed citizens were eager to gather. The initiative to re-purpose barbershops has two primary components: Barbershop Talks and 'Hair and Health'.

Barbershop talks focus on bringing motivated citizens together to identify issues in their local communities and then create strategies for sustained action to address those issues. In 2018 there were multiple talks at 6 barbershops engaging a total of 75 people.

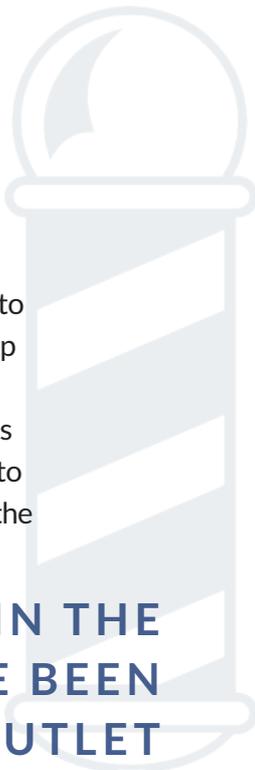
Hair and Health is a barbershop-based initiative inspired by similar programs from in New York and Los Angeles⁵. In these initiatives, barbers are trained to give blood pressure tests and then make appropriate referrals for those who may be suffering from hypertension and be at risk of heart disease. Previous programs proved to be extremely effective in lowering the risk for participating men. The Baton Rouge initiative, still in the development phase, is a partnership between the Mayor's HealthyBR program, MetroMorphosis, participating barber shops and the Department of Health.

2018 Highlights

- 6 barbershop talks engaging 75 citizens in conversations about how to be a part of positive community change
- Partnership with the Mayor's HealthyBR initiative, 15 barbershops, and the Department of Health to conduct blood pressure screenings to identify hypertension of black males who may be at risk of heart disease. The initial Hair and Health meeting brought together 20 barbers from 15 Barbershops to discuss the goals and logistics of implementing the program.

2019 Potential

- Increased participation in both barbershop talks and Hair and Health
- Groups of men identifying critical issues and leading efforts to improve their communities
- Identifying men at risk of heart disease, referring to medical interventions and preventing premature death

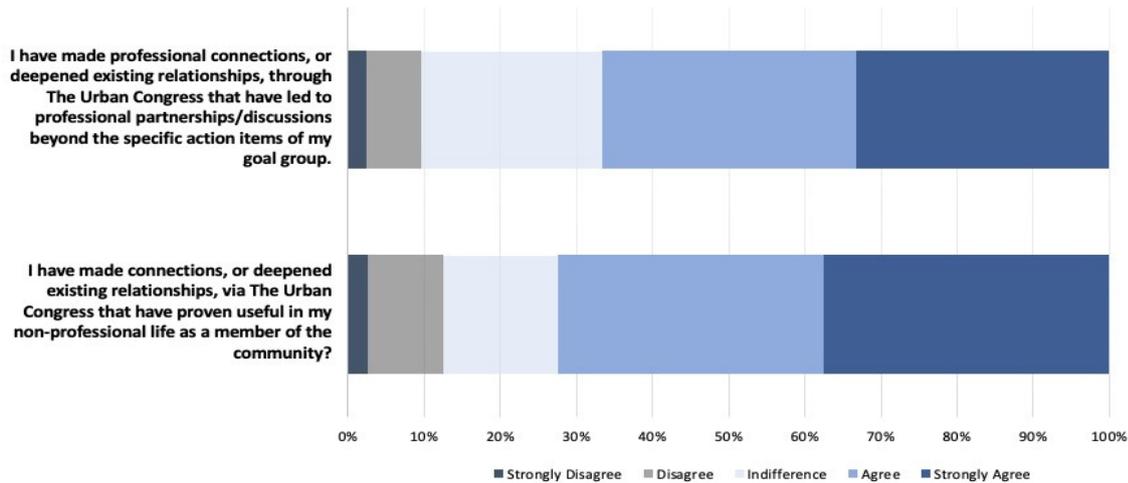


**“BLACK MEN IN THE
COMMUNITY HAVE BEEN
LOOKING FOR THIS OUTLET
TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES
AND BE PART OF CHANGE”**

**- WILLIE MCCORKLE, BARBER FROM
SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY
BARBERSHOP.**

URBAN CONGRESS AS A PLATFORM FOR COMMUNITY FELLOWSHIP AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

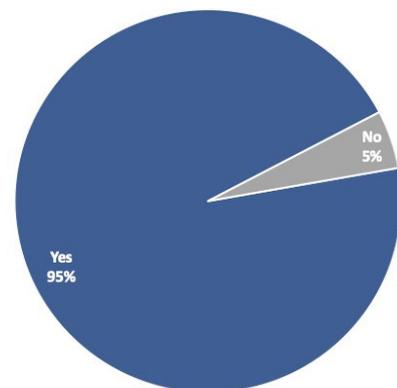
In addition to inspiring and providing momentum for many of the catalytic partnerships discussed above, the Urban Congress On African American Males has also emerged as the heart of a larger movement. At the Urban Congress, delegates report finding a sense of community, purpose, and inspiration that has had a positive impact on their lives professionally, socially, and in terms of their own personal development as individuals.



Two-thirds of Urban Congress delegates say that they have “Made professional connections, or deepened existing relationships, through The Urban Congress that have led to professional partnerships/discussions beyond the specific action items of my goal group.” Perhaps more surprising is the fact that over 70% of delegates report that the Urban Congress has proven useful in their non-professional lives, simply as members of the community.

When asked if participating in the Urban Congress has “helped you to develop personally” over 95% of people answered ‘Yes’. Delegates’ explanations to these questions included: developing collaboration skills, inspiring greater community involvement and volunteering, becoming ‘much more open-minded’, growing as a leader, gaining a greater awareness of the multi-faceted nature of issues in the community, better understanding the impact of policy, grappling with internalized oppression, being more aware of interpersonal relationships, and just feeling inspired by being part of a group of people who are working to create a stronger community.

Has your work with The Urban Congress helped you to develop personally?



Over the course of 2018, the Urban Congress has evolved into something even larger than the bold work being done towards its various goals, it has become the heart of a community working together for positive change. That community, by its members' own reports, has grown to mean a great deal to a great many people.

OUR SCHOOLS, OUR EXCELLENCE & LAUNCHBR

In addition to our emphasis on catalytic partnerships in 2018, MetroMorphosis has also engaged in direct programming in the areas of family engagement and business development. These programs have been executed through the Our Schools Our Excellence and LaunchBR initiatives.

OUR SCHOOLS OUR EXCELLENCE

- Trained 280 family members on how to be active advocates for their children in schools
- Started, or restarted, PTO organizations at Belaire High School, Laurel Oaks Charter School, and Winbourne Elementary, with Brookstown Middle Magnet and Belfair Montessori Magnet starting in 2019
- Provided a speaker and volunteers to strengthen the execution of an anti-bullying initiative at Northdale Alternative Academy.
- Partnered with Brookstown Middle, Istrouma High School, Belaire Magnet High School, and Laurel Oaks Charter School to create family engagement plans tailored for the needs of each school
- Hosted a school board candidate forum to connect citizens with candidates running for office in East Baton Rouge Parish
- Sponsored the Teacher Appreciation Day at Winbourne Elementary
- Sponsored an interactive Community Organizing & Advocacy Training taught by David Hunt, world renowned Kellogg Fellow, in partnership with Hope Community United Methodist Church
- Served on the Magnet Advisory Board of Belaire Magnet High School

LAUNCHBR

- Engaged 10 small landscape businesses in green infrastructure and stormwater management through a partnership with Jacobs Construction, The Garden Lady, LLC, and Patch Studio, a contemporary landscape architecture company.
- Partnered each small business with mentors and coaches to develop growth strategies
- Created a 14 week business development course specifically tailored to the needs of small minority owned businesses using the internationally recognized Co-Starters Curriculum. To date 10 businesses have started the program which will conclude in March of 2019.

IN CONCLUSION

The past year has been marked by significant growth in the work and impact of MetroMorphosis. We are proud of our work, but it is still incomplete. The work of 2018 has laid a solid foundation for our long-term efforts and in the year to come we will build on this foundation and momentum. In 2019 we will organize our work in three principal domains: working to catalyze partnerships with public-sector and non-profit organizations, supporting private-sector business development, and mobilizing citizens to be agents of change in their local communities. What ties these domains together is an approach that emphasizes the latent potential already in our communities and a focus on playing a catalytic role to realize the current and future potentials of our communities.

This is a momentous time for MetroMorphosis. We are proud of what we have done and excited for the work to come.



ENDNOTES

- ¹ The Effects of a Mentoring Program on At-Risk Youth by Keeting, Tomishima, Foster & Alessandri.
<http://beckaar.pbworks.com/w/file/attach/65899514/Mentoring%20at%20risk%20youth.pdf>
- ² Early Warning Systems: Moving From Reaction to Prevention by Dr. Rebecca Sarlo
<http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/rti-in-secondary-schools/early-warning-systems-moving-from-reaction-to-prevention>
- ³ Prisoner Reentry: What Works, What Does Not, and What Is Promising by Seiter & Kadela
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0011128703049003002>
- ⁴ How to Prevent Prisoner Re-entry Programs From Failing: Insights From Evidence-Based Corrections by Listwan, Cullen & Latessa
<https://www.uc.edu/content/dam/uc/ics/docs/ListwanCullenLatessaHowToPrevent.pdf>
- ⁵ A Cluster-Randomized Trial of Blood-Pressure Reduction in Black Barbershops by Victor et al.
<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1717250>