



2019 Impact Report

Transforming Urban Communities from Within

2019 IMPACT REPORT

Our mission at MetroMorphosis is to transform urban communities from within. We know that our communities already contain so much more wisdom and capacity than they are normally given credit for. We see the impacts of poverty and the ills that grow from it, but we also see the unrealized potential of our people and the ubiquity of underutilized assets hiding in plain sight. Our work is about helping established institutions see the potential of our communities from this perspective and then collaborating with them to create more effective and equitable systems that build from the assets already in our communities. In practice this approach takes many different forms. It looks like repurposing barber shops as centers of civic dialogue and blood pressure testing sites. It looks like partnering with major institutions like Coca Cola, Turner Industries, and LSU to create a procurement council that ensures small businesses have an opportunity to bid for major contracts. It looks like bringing together parents, teachers, central office administrators, and national experts to design new systems for parental engagement. It looks like working with the Department of Corrections and formerly incarcerated individuals to redesign processes for reentry. It looks like cultivating local leaders and pushing ongoing community dialogue in our schools, libraries, and places of worship. By connecting established institutions with the assets in the communities they intend to support, we are catalyzing the creation of systems that are both more equitable and more effective. Through these efforts we are creating deep and sustainable change that lives both in the hopes of individuals and also in the systems that define their access to knowledge and opportunity.

Each of the strategies mentioned above stems from one of the three organizational priorities that have framed our work for 2019: 1) Mobilize citizens as agents of change in their communities, 2) Reactivate/repurpose existing community assets, 3) Develop catalytic partnerships to reshape systems with a focus on equity. This three-pronged approach focused on individual citizens, the assets around them, and the larger systems that define opportunity, has proven to be a successful one. This report details the impact of the strategies we have pursued in 2019. We are proud of the work we have accomplished this year, but in many ways, we are just getting started.

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MOBILIZING OUR CITIZENS

The quickest way to get an overall picture of the work of MetroMorphosis is to look at the ways that we mobilize people. **Mobilization is a unifying thread that stitches through all of the work that we do.**

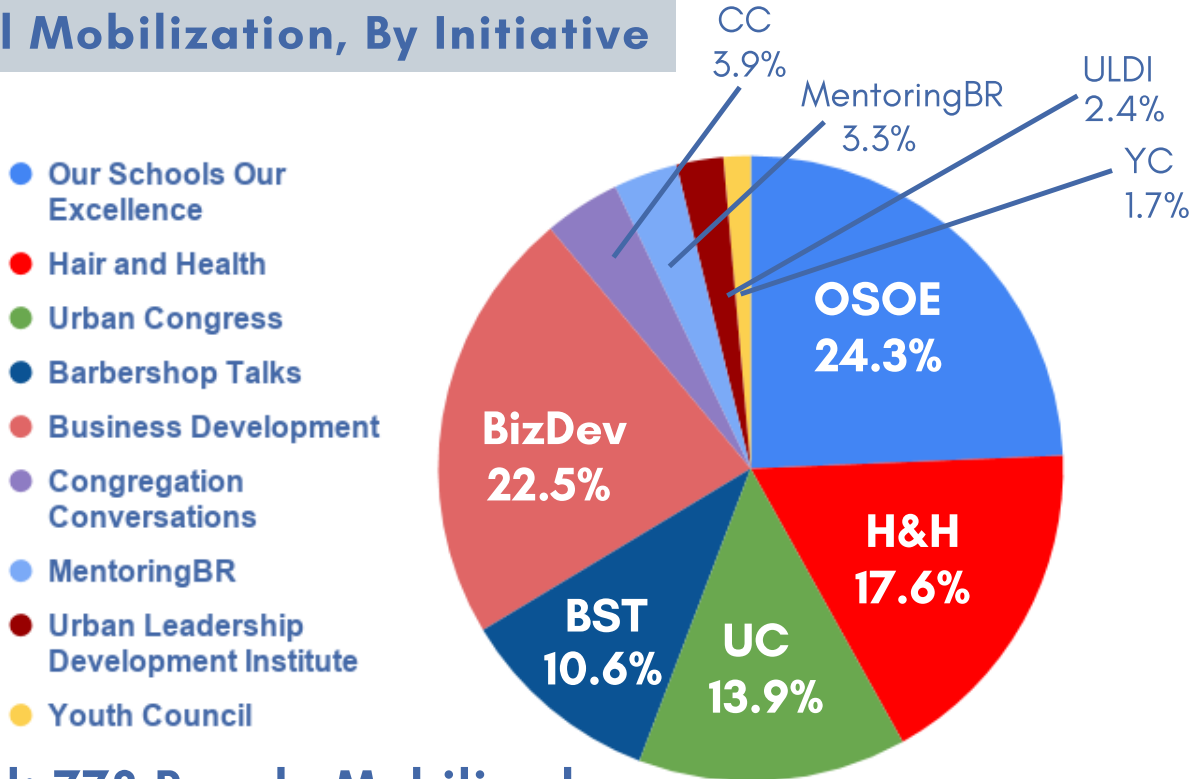
We believe that transforming our communities requires us to mobilize a wide array of citizens and institutional stakeholders to participate in this movement. We track this mobilization every time people gather to learn or work as part of a MetroMorphosis initiative. This mobilization tracking has two components: overall participation and intensity of participation. We want to know how many people we connect with, but we understand that not all mobilization is equal. To accurately measure intensity we utilize a tiered system to categorize each person we connect with along a mobilization continuum.

This system for tracking mobilization ensures that we are focused on creating opportunities that allow for sustained commitment from our various partners in this movement. Our focus on depth of mobilization also allows us to identify individuals who may be ready to advance to more active levels of leadership in this movement.



MOBILIZATION: DATA SNAPSHOT

Total Mobilization, By Initiative



Total: 778 People Mobilized

Depth of Mobilization

The categories we use to define depth of mobilization are described as follows:

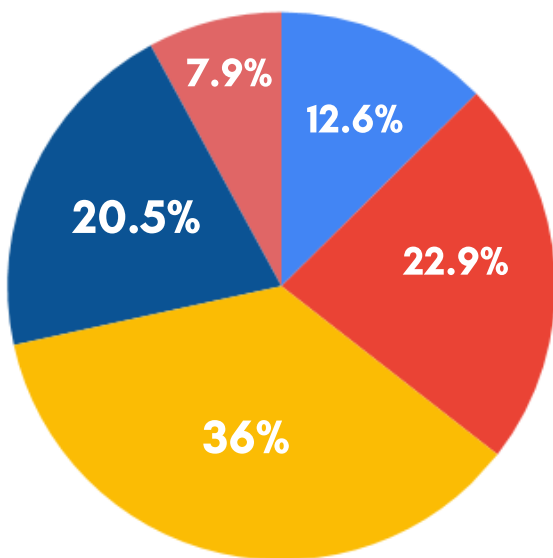
Inform: a person who attends a MetroMorphosis event or training

Consult: a person who attends a MetroMorphosis event or training AND contributes insights or feedback that can inform future work

Involve: a person who regularly participates in MetroMorphosis initiatives and helps to shape strategy

Collaborate: a person who does work between formal meetings to advance the strategies of MetroMorphosis

Empower: a person who has initiated independent work or advanced professionally because of their connection with MetroMorphosis



● Involve ● Consult ● Inform ● Collaborate ● Empower



Metromorphosis' annual Urban Congress Convening brings together leaders from different sectors to launch their work groups' efforts.



Participants at the Disrupting Dehumanization workshop discuss how society dehumanizes people of color, and how to shift the conversation.



Barbershop Talks participants engage in conversations about issues affecting the community in a comfortable and familiar space.



Harvard Graduate School of Education Professor **Karen Mapp** leads a workshop on parent and family engagement frameworks for school district leadership.



Community leaders attend Metromorphosis' **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Training**, where they discuss strategies to help children cope with trauma.



Local entrepreneurs **Richard Curtis, Dezmon Barrow, and Merco Parker** (left to right) celebrate after Metromorphosis' PitchBR event.

HAIR AND HEALTH: AN OVERVIEW

Our Hair & Health strategy **works to combat heart disease**, the number one cause of death among African-American men, **by repurposing barbershops as blood pressure testing sites**. From May through November, 138 men have had at least one blood pressure reading, learned whether or not they have high blood pressure, and been given access to advice and resources according to their personal blood pressure reading.

The importance of this initiative has been underscored by the data we have collected so far. We have found that **96% of men who participate have a blood pressure reading above the normal range**. 5% of men have an elevated blood pressure, 40% have a blood pressure that classifies as hypertension stage 1, and 51% have a blood pressure that indicates hypertension stage 2. Men with hypertension are at significantly heightened risk for heart attack or stroke.

This data may seem alarming, but we also know that high blood pressure is a reversible condition. Sharing this information with men, suggesting lifestyle adjustments, and recommending doctor visits as necessary, has proven an effective way to inspire men to take steps that lower their blood pressure. **31% of men with hypertension, who have had their blood pressure read 5 or more times, have reduced their blood pressure enough to move to a lower risk zone**. 41% of men who originally had hypertension stage two have escaped that range and 22% of men with hypertension stage 1 have moved to the 'elevated' or 'normal' range.

Hair & Health exemplifies two of the foundational approaches of MetroMorphosis: a focus on repurposing local assets and an emphasis on cooperation amongst systems level stakeholders. Hair & Health is a collaboration between Louisiana Healthcare Connections, the American Heart Association, HealthyBR, MetroMorphosis, and the 11 participating barber shops across Baton Rouge. Through a focus on a high-priority health issue, an understanding of local community assets, an ability to develop relationships with local barbers, and the collaboration of systems level stakeholders, **MetroMorphosis' Hair & Health strategy is literally helping to save lives.**

HAIR AND HEALTH: DATA SNAPSHOT

11 • **138** • **91%**

BARBERSHOPS **PARTICIPANTS** **POSITIVE FOR HYPERTENSION IN FIRST READING**

40% STAGE 1
51% STAGE 2

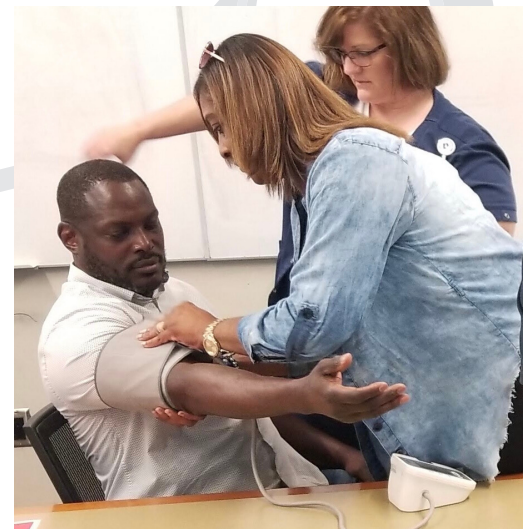
31% OF REGULAR PARTICIPANTS SAW A SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR BLOOD PRESSURE.*

Blood Pressure Categories



BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120 – 129	and	LESS THAN 80
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1	130 – 139	or	80 – 89
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120

"I had my blood pressure checked at the Grooming Goddess Barber and Beauty Spa and **it gave me a wake up call.** I didn't know that my blood pressure was high and I didn't know at all that high. **I went straight to the doctor and have been on medication since to lower it.** I'm glad that they were checking because I would not have known. **I thought I was healthy.**" – **Michael Foster**



*31% of men who had their blood pressure read five or more times have entered a lower risk zone. 41% of men in hypertension stage 2 entered a lower range and 22% of men in hypertension stage 1 moved to "Elevated" or "Normal."

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Our business development work focuses on **expanding the capacity and opportunities of small businesses in our community**. We understand that strengthening the small business community is a critical component of sustainable transformation, and we have invested an increasing amount of our resources in this strategy.

In 2019, **MetroMorphosis led efforts at the city-parish that resulted in the Metro Council amending Ordinance 12253** relating to the Design Planning and Selection Board. This resulted in an adjustment to procurement policies for city-parish contracts. These new policies ensure that there will be a targeted solicitation of bids from minority, female, and veteran-owned businesses. MetroMorphosis also **worked to create a procurement council of some of the largest contractors in the region** (shown on the following page). This council was established to create a new and more equitable procurement system that ensures smaller local businesses will be able to bid on some of the most significant contracts being procured in our region. Since its formation in the summer of 2019, this procurement council has already resulted in **over \$197,000 in new contracts flowing to small businesses** in Baton Rouge.

MetroMorphosis has also been **designated as the 'Small Business Outreach Leader' for the program management team of the \$1.18 billion redevelopment project MoveEBR**. Through our role in this larger project we have begun to identify and connect local businesses with opportunities that fit their areas of expertise. In this way, we are working to ensure that this development project lifts up the people and businesses in the community where it is taking place. In addition to this work to shift the design of local systems, MetroMorphosis also works to better prepare small businesses to participate in these systems. Through business development trainings, a PitchBR business plan competition, a mentor-protege initiative, and regular strategic support to businesses in the LaunchBR cohort, we are helping to equip businesses with the knowledge and skills necessary to grow. **These initiatives have resulted in 17 businesses securing new credit, expanding capacity through equipment or additional employees, and receiving new contracts.**

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT: DATA SNAPSHOT

PROCUREMENT COUNCIL

- Baton Rouge Area Chamber
- Baton Rouge General Medical Center
- Blue Cross Blue Shield
- Coca-Cola Bottling
- East Baton Rouge City-Parish Government
- East Baton Rouge Fair Share
- East Baton Rouge Parish Housing Authority
- Exxon Mobil
- Jacobs Engineering
- Louisiana State University
- Mary Bird Perkins
- Turner Industries

\$200,000+

**IN NEW
CONTRACTS
AWARDED TO
SMALL
BUSINESSES IN
BATON ROUGE***

17

**BUSINESSES
EXPANDED
CAPACITY
THROUGH
HIRING AND
NEW LINES
OF CREDIT**



LaunchBR participants attend Build Day, an opportunity to learn about landscaping and horticultural entrepreneurship.

*The \$200,000+ number includes the \$197,000 in contracts from the Procurement Council, as well as smaller contracts from the LaunchBR initiative.

OUR SCHOOLS, OUR EXCELLENCE

In many ways our schools are the most visible and influential assets present in our neighborhoods and our work with them plays a central role in our larger efforts to transform urban communities from within. In 2019 our work in education has focused on three primary strategies: expansion of an early warning system to prevent school dropouts, family and faculty trainings focused on developing a dual capacity building framework for family engagement, and creation of a collective impact network to lay the foundation for long-term systemic change.

The Early Warning System is designed to provide interventions for students whose academics or behavior indicate they may be at-risk of dropping out. This system was piloted at Istrouma High School in the 2018-19 school year and, based on that success, the school district has asked us to expand to four more schools: Brookstown Middle, Capitol Middle, Glen Oaks Middle, and Glen Oaks High School.

The East Baton Rouge Parish School System has also embraced our work around family engagement. We are working with 16 schools to guide them through the dual-capacity building framework, a nationally renowned model for redesigning school systems to build positive and purposeful relationships with families rooted in student learning. Through buy-in from principals and district level administrators we have provided trainings for 16 schools in the district.

In December 2019 we will also be launching a collective action initiative focused on education. This work will bring together more than two dozen community organizations to collaborate in working groups focused on family engagement, teacher recruitment & retention, and culturally relevant curriculum & pedagogy.



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**SCHOOLS
TRAINED ON
THE DUAL-
CAPACITY
BUILDING
FRAMEWORK
TO IMPROVE
FAMILY
ENGAGEMENT**



5

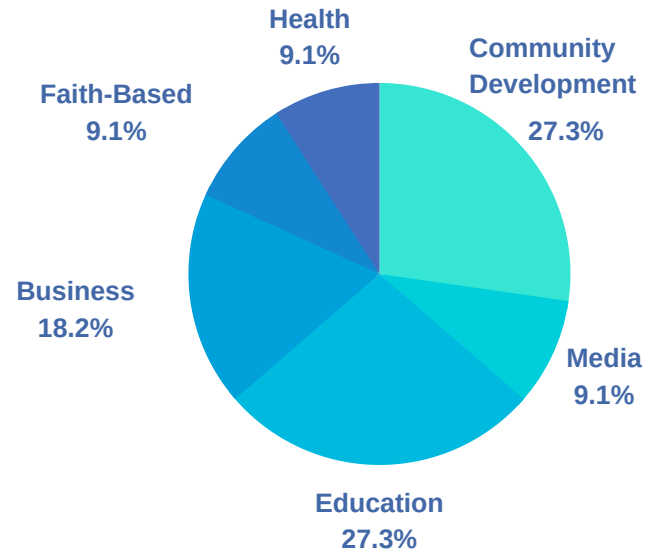
**SCHOOLS
USING THE
EARLY
WARNING
SYSTEM TO
LOWER
DROPOUT
RATES**

URBAN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (ULDI)

Transforming our urban communities requires a **strong pipeline of individuals dedicated to addressing and solving pressing issues through the practice of adaptive leadership.** The 2019 Urban Leadership Development Initiative cohort is made up of aspiring leaders from business, education, community development, healthcare, the media, and the faith-based community. They are united by a commitment to Baton Rouge and a passion to lead their communities and institutions to tackle tough challenges. **ULDI is helping to create a new network of leaders across Baton Rouge** who are connected by both a common understanding of the pervasive and systemic challenges we face and an understanding of how to lead change to address the inequities in those systems.

In the 5 years since ULDI began, many alumni have already begun to realize this vision. Alumni have been: promoted to **top leadership positions** in their organizations, recognized in the Baton Rouge Business Report's **40 Under 40**, joined **boards of directors** for local nonprofits and community organizations, run for **elected office**, and continued to be **actively engaged** in community change.

SECTORS OF IMPACT



ULDI COHORT IN ACTION



CATALYTIC PARTNERSHIPS: RE-ENTRY

MetroMorphosis serves as a community coordinator for the Louisiana Prisoner Reentry Initiative. The five-year recidivism rate in Louisiana is currently 43% and we are proud to be part of the work to address this issue.

Our approach to this role has focused on **catalyzing relationships and working to shift systems to create a more coherent continuum of services throughout the reentry process.** All parishes are required to develop a plan to improve reentry processes, but the approach MetroMorphosis is helping to organize is distinct from other regions. We have brought in-reach providers, who work inside of prisons, into the transition planning process and helped connect them with community support organizations who work with ex-offenders once they are released.



This approach of bringing together in-reach providers and community support organizations to work together with Department of Corrections leadership is substantially different than the approach of most parishes whose plans are more narrowly focused on DOC procedures and responsibilities. In this way, **our work to catalyze partnerships to improve reentry is emblematic of the larger theory of change that drives MetroMorphosis.** While most initiatives tend to focus on improving a particular role that a single organization plays in a larger system, our instinct is to step back and assess how the various organizations in a system interact to define how that system works at a macro level. We believe that systems level challenges require systems level solutions.

CONCLUSION

At MetroMorphosis, we are constantly humbled by the scale of our ambition and we are constantly renewed by the strength and passion of our partners in the community. Our work is challenging in both its range and depth, but by focusing on community mobilization, strengthening the assets already present in our communities, and emphasizing the need for systems level change, we have been able to make dramatic progress this year.

In 2019, we have mobilized 778 people across 9 initiatives, created systems responsible for over \$200,000 in new contracts to small businesses, implemented a system that has led to dozens of men making lifestyle changes that have lowered their risk of heart attack and stroke, trained leadership at over 16 schools in a new approach to family engagement, catalyzed partnerships to improve the continuity of the reentry process for ex-offenders, and continued to develop a new network of leaders skilled with the knowledge and mindsets to expand this style of work beyond the umbrella of MetroMorphosis.

We often say that we must move beyond the satisfaction of positive moments to stay focused on steering an impactful movement. This focus on a long-term mindset is responsible for the significant impact we have been able to make this year. With each year, our movement grows stronger and more purposeful. We look forward to building on this momentum to drive our work even further in 2020.