



BREVARD, NORTH CAROLINA

A PROUD BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY

The first certified Blue Zones Community[®] in the state invests in well-being for a more livable, vibrant, and healthy future.





CONGRATS, BREVARD, FOR PUTTING WELL-BEING ON THE MAP!

You deserve a round of applause.
And maybe even a standing ovation.
Because together we made it happen.

In Brevard, we are seizing every opportunity to move well-being in the right direction.

After launching Blue Zones Project® in our community, we've seen physical well-being, social well-being, and community pride rise, while tobacco use, and risk factors like high cholesterol and high blood pressure are on the decline. City leaders, business owners, teachers, and volunteers are coming together to transform our environments into places where optimal health ensues and a culture of well-being flourishes.

A resurgence is underway. Brevard has always been a great place to live, work, learn, and play—and it's only getting better.

We did this together. By putting our personal and collective well-being first, we're making healthy choices easier, creating more economic opportunities, and ensuring a better quality of life for everyone. Here's to making Brevard one of the healthiest communities in North Carolina, where residents are living better, together.

THE JOURNEY TO BECOME A BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Blue Zones Project® helps communities implement the longevity and happiness lessons learned from the world's extraordinary people and cultures to measurably improve well-being and create enhanced community vitality. The method of work is to drive community-led semi-permanent and permanent change in man-made surroundings. This approach is designed to make healthier choices easier, more ubiquitous, and sustainable. The effect: people moving more naturally, taking more time to downshift daily, discovering the power of purpose, eating wisely, and deepening their connections with friends, family, and their faith. Over time, these collective choices compound to sustainably improve well-being. In 2019, a broad base of Brevard's leadership set a 3.5-year course to do just that.

The value of Blue Zones Project is measured by the engagement of its citizens; the number, type, and scope of semi-permanent and permanent changes implemented; the prevalence and incidence rates of lifestyle risks and disease; and measurable improvements in well-being; all of which ultimately lead to lower medical costs, better workforce productivity, and a strengthened regional economy.

Since 2019, Brevard has undergone its own community transformation, exceeding targets set to engage individuals and organizations, and to implement citywide policy changes. Well-being has reached new highs according to the most recent Sharecare Community Well-Being Index (CWBI) and other community indicators.

Our community improved in all five key well-being areas measured by the CWBI—community, social, purpose, physical, and financial—and overall well-being rose from 68.1 to 70.6 out of 100 points.

A broad coalition has supported Brevard's efforts to adopt 22 policies and plans positively affecting entities like the Ecusta Trail, City of Brevard Community Garden, Transylvania County Tobacco Committee, and Transylvania County Food Commission that will guide future decision-making toward an even more vibrant and active community. This work was bolstered by \$3.8 million in grant funding supported by Blue Zones Project. Going forward, plans will be advanced by organizations like Brevard Sustainable Suburban Development, the City of Brevard's Affordable Housing effort, MANA, Brevard College, Transylvania County Tobacco Coalition, Transylvania County Food Coalition, and Hunger Coalition.

The semi-permanent and permanent changes

already made will continue to compound over time to produce an even bigger future return for Brevard. The return on investment can be measured in myriad ways, as the value captured is unique to each citizen, family, and organization. In this way, Brevard has been enriched as a community where more people and businesses choose to be. Conservatively, the 3-year estimated healthcare and workforce productivity savings for Brevard total \$5.2 million.

With sustained momentum, continued implementation of city policy and plans, and advancement of the project's work in key areas, Brevard stands to drive even greater improvements to community well-being in the future.

When Blue Zones Project first engaged Brevard leadership three and a half years ago, we established an ambitious plan together for the community to become North Carolina's first Blue Zones Community®. Today, Brevard stands as a new benchmark across the state and country for what bold leaders can achieve when they invest in the health and well-being of their citizens. Congratulations for creating an even better Brevard!

A woman in a red jacket and a man in a black long-sleeve shirt are performing yoga in a field. The woman is on the left, wearing a red zip-up jacket and dark grey pants, with her hands in a prayer position and her right leg raised. The man is on the right, wearing a black long-sleeve shirt and dark shorts, also with his hands in a prayer position and his right leg raised. They are standing in a grassy field with a line of trees in the background under a cloudy sky.

THE BLUE ZONES PROJECT STORY

What do Ikaria, Greece; Loma Linda, California; Sardinia, Italy; Okinawa, Japan; and Nicoya, Costa Rica, have in common? Their citizens lead vibrant, healthy, and amazingly long lives. These places are known as blue zones longevity hot spots, where people live measurably longer, with lower incidences of chronic disease and a higher quality of life.



More than 86 percent₁ of the nearly \$3 trillion in annual U.S. healthcare costs are spent on chronic disease₁. Yet much of this disease can be prevented and reduced in impact through lifestyle changes.

According to a long-term population study of Danish twins, 80 percent of a person's lifespan is determined by lifestyle choices, environmental factors, and access to care. Only 20 percent is genetic.₂ Unfortunately, in most places, our environment encourages unhealthy choices. Americans are bombarded daily with messages for unhealthy products and surrounded by modern "conveniences" that make us more sedentary and isolated.

DISCOVERING BLUE ZONES

In 2004, Dan Buettner teamed up with National Geographic, the National Institute on Aging, and the world's best longevity researchers to identify pockets around the world where people lived measurably better, longer. In the five original blue zones regions, they found that people reached age 100 at rates ten times greater than the U.S. average, with lower rates of chronic disease. These original blue zones areas are in vastly different parts of the world, from Sardinia, Italy and Ikaria, Greece to Okinawa, Japan, Costa Rica's Nicoya Peninsula, and stateside in Loma Linda, California. Studying the factors that influenced health and longevity in these places, researchers found that residents share nine specific traits. Dan Buettner captured these insights in his New York Times best-selling books, *The Blue Zones* and *The Blue Zones Solution*.



BLUE ZONES POWER 9

The secrets to well-being and longevity are found in the Power 9®—nine common principles from the world’s blue zones longevity hot spots. They can be grouped into four categories. These principles are the basis for how Blue Zones Project impacts communities to make healthy choices easier:

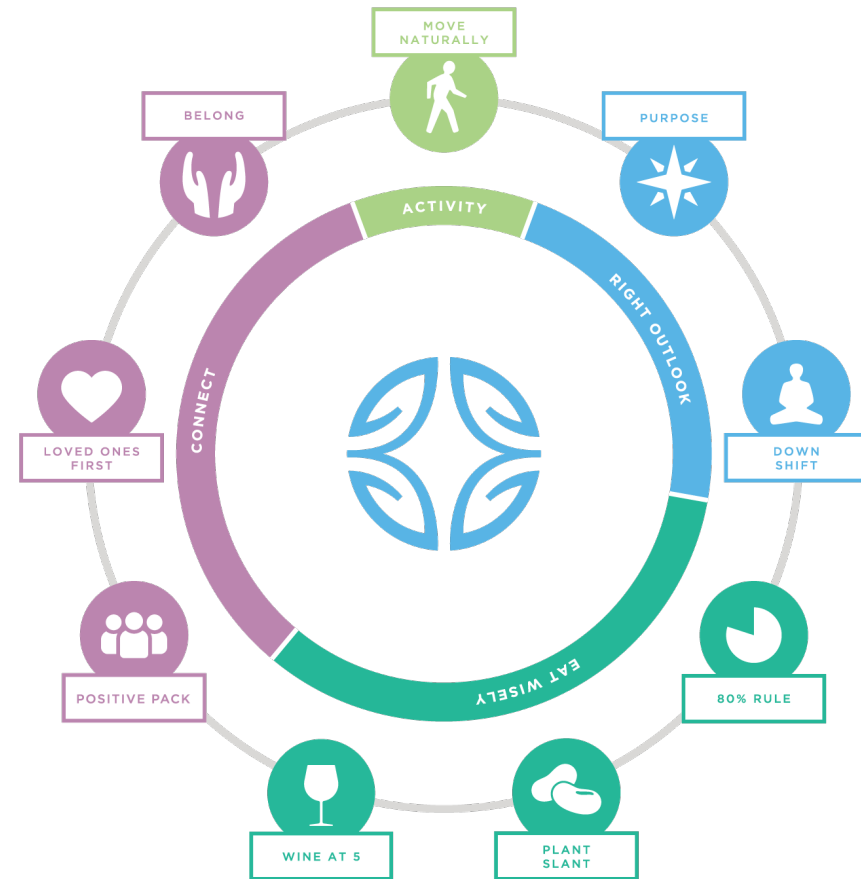
Move Naturally. Homes, communities, and workplaces are designed to nudge people into physical activity. Focus should be given to favorite activities, as individuals are more likely to practice them regularly. For example: gardening, walking, or biking to run errands, and playing with one’s family are great ways to incorporate natural movement into the day.

Right Outlook. Individuals know and can articulate their sense of purpose. They also take time to downshift, ensuring their day is punctuated with periods of calm.

Eat Wisely. In most cases, fad diets do not provide sustainable results. Individuals and families can use time-honored strategies for healthier eating habits, including:

- Using verbal reminders or smaller plates to eat less at meals
- Adopting a diet with a plant slant
- For adults with a healthy relationship with alcohol, drinking a glass of wine with friends.

Connect. Research indicates it is exceedingly important that individuals surround themselves with the “right” people—those who make them happy and support healthy behaviors. Put loved ones first by spending quality time with family and friends, and by participating in a faith-based community.



BLUE ZONES PROJECT LIFE RADIUS

Blue Zones Project takes a unique, systematic approach to improving well-being by focusing on our life radius.

Blue Zones Project is based upon Dan Buettner's discoveries and additional well-being research. A community-led well-being improvement initiative, Blue Zones Project is designed to make healthy choices easier through permanent changes to a community's environment, policy, and social networks. More than 70 communities have joined the movement since the first pilot project in 2009. Brevard is the first community in the state to make the commitment to transform well-being with Blue Zones Project.

Because healthier environments naturally nudge people toward healthier choices, Blue Zones Project focuses on influencing the Life Radius®, the area close to home in which people spend the majority of their lives. Blue Zones Project best practices use policy, places, and people as levers to transform those surroundings. Our communities have populations with greater well-being, improved health outcomes, reduced costs, stronger resiliency, and increased civic pride, all of which support healthy economic development.





SHARECARE COMMUNITY WELL-BEING INDEX

The world's most definitive measurement of well-being

Based on over 4M surveys and over 600 elements of social determinants of health data, Sharecare's Community Well-Being Index serves as the definitive measure of community well-being across and within populations. Measuring well-being gives policy, community, and business leaders the data to benchmark populations, understand gaps and opportunities, and then prioritize interventions to measurably improve well-being. Improving well-being has been shown to lower health care costs and increase worker productivity, in turn, enhancing organizational and community competitiveness.



MEASURING THE IMPACT

Change requires action. It isn't enough to do something one time; lasting change, which is a central tenet of Blue Zones Project, must be created from permanent and semi-permanent changes and alterations to the environment, policies, programs, and social networks. These actions allow healthy choices to become easy choices today and for many years to come.

When Blue Zones Project launched in Brevard, overall community well-being sat at 68.1 points out of 100 according to Sharecare Community Well-Being Index (CWBI) data. **Today, overall well-being in Brevard is 70.6, a statistically significant 2.5-point increase.** Each point increase in well-being score leads to an approximate 2 percent reduction in emergency room (ER) visits and hospital utilization, and an approximate 1 percent reduction in total healthcare costs.

This improvement highlights the intentional efforts to improve the health of Brevard's residents.

Well-Being on the Rise in Brevard

	2020	2022	Point Change
Overall Well-Being Score	68.1	70.6	2.5 ↑
Purpose Well-Being	64.8	67.4	2.6 ↑
Social Well-Being	68.2	70.3	2.1 ↑
Financial Well-Being	67.7	68.5	0.8 ↑
Community Well-Being	71.4	71.8	0.4 ↑
Physical Well-Being	66.9	70.9	4.0 ↑





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IN COMMUNITIES WITH HIGHER WELL-BEING, WE HAVE FOUND THAT PEOPLE LIVE LONGER, HAPPIER LIVES AND BUSINESS AND LOCAL ECONOMIES FLOURISH. A RELIABLE WELL-BEING METRIC PROVIDES COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS LEADERS WITH THE DATA AND INSIGHTS THEY NEED TO HELP MAKE SUSTAINED TRANSFORMATION A REALITY. AFTER ALL, IF YOU CAN'T MEASURE IT, YOU CAN'T MANAGE IT.

Dan Buettner
New York Times best-selling author
National Geographic Fellow
Blue Zones founder



PUTTING WELL-BEING ON THE MAP IN BREVARD

As a pioneer in innovation, Brevard is the first community in North Carolina to embark on its journey to transform well-being with Blue Zones Project.

Brevard is prioritizing the health of its neighbors and investing in policies and programs to improve health equity for those who need it most. Our neighbors, employers, teachers, and community leaders have made tremendous strides in optimizing the places where we all live, work, learn, and play.

Brevard is a community to be proud of, and our well-being transformation is only just beginning.



BLUE ZONES PROJECT CAN HELP MAKE BREVARD A HEALTHY PLACE TO LIVE. EACH OF US IS ULTIMATELY IN CONTROL OF OUR HEALTH BY THE CHOICES WE MAKE. BREVARD IS A GEM OF A COMMUNITY. BLUE ZONES PROJECT WILL MAKE US DAZZLE.

Dr. Ora Wells
Blue Zones Project Steering
Committee Member

A COMMUNITY IN ACTION

The landscape for well-being in America cannot be improved without committed partnerships. That's why leaders across many sectors joined forces to take action and positively impact our residential and business communities. This broad, holistic approach is making healthy choices easier.

A vital part of Brevard's well-being improvement initiative, Blue Zones Project encourages changes to our community that lead to healthier options. When our entire community participates—from our worksites and schools to our restaurants and grocery stores—the small changes contribute to huge benefits for all of us: lowered healthcare costs, improved productivity, and ultimately, a higher quality of life.

Local businesses, organizations, residents, and community leaders came together to make incremental changes that caused a ripple effect, improving well-being across the city and bringing individuals together to create lasting change.

More than 5,000 community members of all ages and backgrounds participated in Blue Zones Project - Brevard. Many attended free cooking demonstrations and Purpose Workshops or joined supportive Moais for connecting to walk or eat healthier in small group potlucks. Hundreds donated their time toward volunteer opportunities across Brevard. Many residents also supported Blue Zones Project planning and implementation by serving on committees.

A critical mass of places optimized their environments for healthy living. **More than 70 organizations participated in Blue Zones Project.** Worksites, schools, restaurants, grocery stores, and community groups made changes that produced new gardens, brought attention to healthier foods, created safer walking routes, offered space to de-stress, and energized employees, members, and residents with new connections and purpose.



From a policy and community planning standpoint, Brevard is creating, supporting, and implementing:

- An ordinance to make downtown Brevard and city events smoke-free, and prohibiting smoking on city property and in city vehicles
- Collaboration with NC DOT on downtown traffic-calming measures and improvements to pedestrian signage and signals
- New food and tobacco coalitions (Transylvania County Food Coalition and Transylvania County Tobacco Cessation Committee) formed to sustain policy work
- Doubling the number of community gardens from four to eight
- Increased city spending on multi-use paths, including the addition of over 3,000 feet of new trail to extend the Estatoe Trail

Working together with partners across Brevard, **more than \$3.8 million in grant funding has been secured to help support these and other policy initiatives across the community.**



THE WORLD IS WATCHING

Blue Zones Project has attracted local and national recognition, with more than 775 media mentions to date.

Blue Zones Project - Brevard has been heralded for innovative approaches to population health management in various publications, including those noted below.

BLUE ZONES PROJECT - BREVARD IN THE NEWS

775

Total Mentions

3.9 Billion+

Total Reach

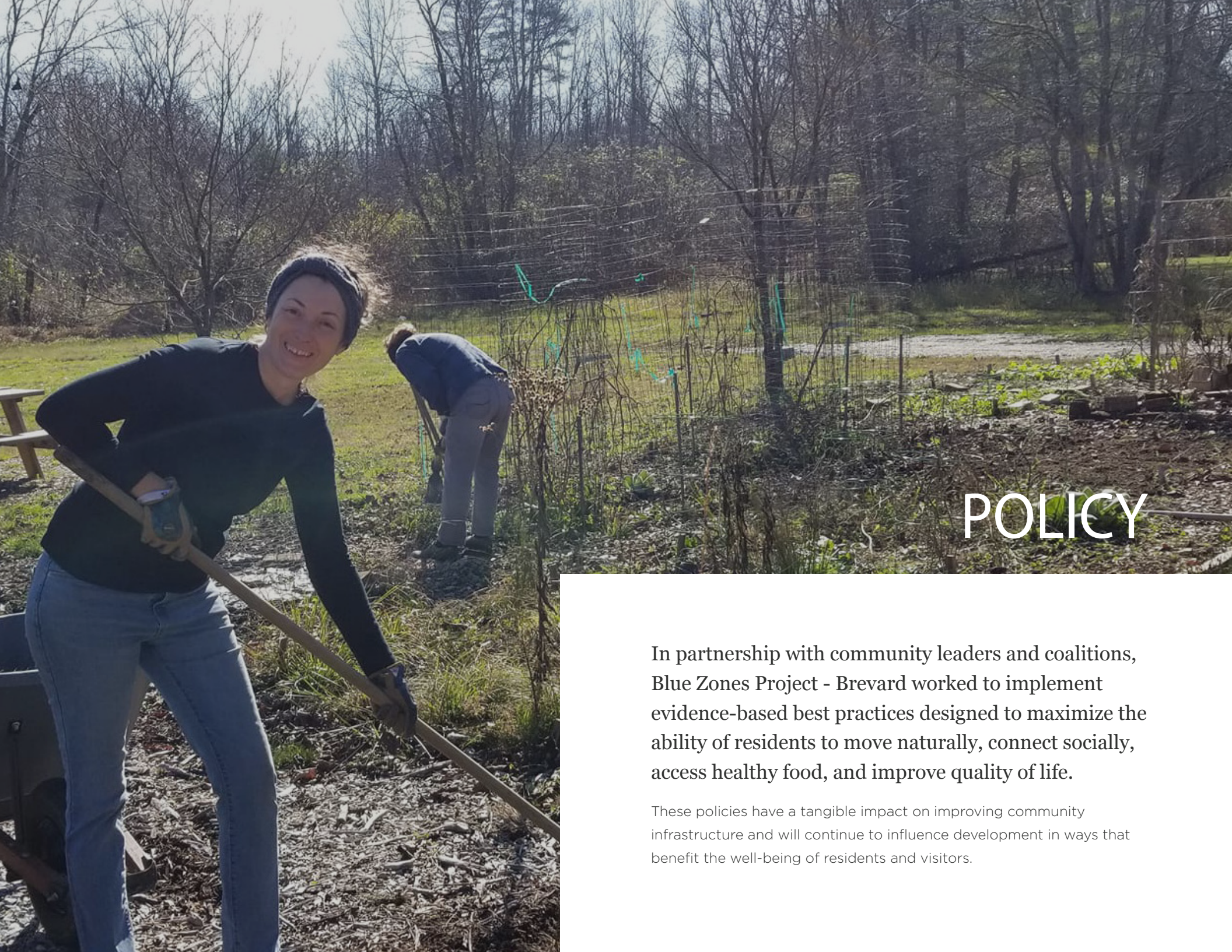
\$7.4 Million

Total Publicity Value*

**Publicity value calculated using Cision Media Monitoring service.*

The Transylvania Times





POLICY

In partnership with community leaders and coalitions, Blue Zones Project - Brevard worked to implement evidence-based best practices designed to maximize the ability of residents to move naturally, connect socially, access healthy food, and improve quality of life.

These policies have a tangible impact on improving community infrastructure and will continue to influence development in ways that benefit the well-being of residents and visitors.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

We generally exercise too hard or not at all. However, the world's longest-lived people don't pump iron, run marathons, or join gyms.

Instead, they live in environments that constantly nudge them into moving without thinking about it. They live in places where they can walk to the store, a friend's house, or places of worship. Their houses have stairs. They have gardens in their yards. It's not just about moving; it's about moving naturally.

The built environment can support—or discourage—moving naturally. Built environment policies help communities move away from automobile-centric development to better accommodate all users and modes of transportation.

Why It Matters

About 69 percent of the American population can be classified as overweight or obese.³ Our children's life expectancy is projected to be shorter than that of

their parents for the first time in history. Obesity is not just a health problem, it's an economic one, too. **The estimated annual health care costs of obesity-related illness are a staggering \$190 billion, or nearly 21 percent of annual medical spending.** Childhood obesity alone is responsible for \$14 billion in direct medical costs.⁴

The good news is there is a solution for this growing issue. Increasing simple movements like standing, walking, stretching, and bending can help burn an extra 350 calories a day. **Studies show that just by making our communities more walkable, the prevalence of obesity can decrease by more than 10 percent.**⁵

That adds up to even bigger possibilities like lowered incidences of heart disease, diabetes, and respiratory issues and increased productivity, vitality, and years of quality life.

Policies that support natural movement can shift the dynamics in any community toward more physical activity. **Brevard has made the move, with eight built environment policies adopted.**

Key Actions and Innovations

- Contributed to policy writing and review to support priorities like an updated Land Use Plan, Heart of Brevard Downtown Master Plan, affordable workforce housing policies, Bike and Pedestrian Plans, and grant applications
- Supported the creation or improvement of ten gathering spaces, including a dog park, community gardens, school gardens, and Downtown Plaza
- Collaborated with NC DOT to calm traffic and improve safety downtown, including the installation of Leading Pedestrian interval signals; Yield to Pedestrian signage; and repainting crosswalks, stop bars, and turn arrows
- Helped establish a new Low Income Housing Tax Credit Project that will create 60 affordable housing units and a healthy-eating-oriented food pantry
- City spending on downtown livability improvements rose from \$41,000 in 2020 to \$830,000 in 2022 for pedestrian alley improvements, mural creation, tree planting, and bump-outs

POLICY: BUILT ENVIRONMENT

In addition to this work, Blue Zones Project – Brevard partnered with the **Brevard City Police Department** and the **Transylvania County Sheriff's Office** to implement Transylvania County Vision Zero. TC Vision Zero is a new state-supported program that will create a comprehensive action plan that looks at how streets, roads, sidewalks, and trails are built and interface, while equitably enforcing related laws and community standards.

Collectively, the built environment initiatives supported by Blue Zones Project will help keep pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists of Brevard safe for many years to come.



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BLUE ZONES PROJECT HAS HAD GREAT COLLABORATION WITH CITY STAFF. IT IS NOW SO EMBEDDED IN HOW THE CITY DOES BUSINESS THAT TO REVERSE IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE...A DAY DOESN'T GO BY IN THIS TOWN WHERE I DON'T SEE OR HEAR SOMETHING ABOUT BLUE ZONES.

Maureen Copelof
Mayor, City of Brevard



IMPACT OF COMMUNITY DESIGN IMPROVEMENTS

- Since 2020, Brevard's walk score went from 67 points out of 100 (somewhat walkable) to 76 (very walkable). The community's bike score also rose from 59 to 63 out of 100.
- Between 2020 and 2022, Brevard residents experienced a 7.9 percent increase in the amount of people who exercised 30+ minutes 3+ days per week.
- The number of residents who walk or bike to work is more than double North Carolina averages.
- Helped attract 24 new businesses to downtown Brevard in 2020-2021, with 82 new jobs. During the same time, 27 downtown buildings were rehabilitated or expanded.



All Trails Lead to Better Well-Being

In Brevard, we are fortunate to have the beautiful urban greenway system connecting significant portions of our community. Much work remains to be done, however, to tie all our neighborhoods, schools, and recreation areas together to promote health and fitness and reduce the use of motorized transportation.

Blue Zones Project - Brevard identified the Ecusta Trail as its marquee built environment project, and team members have worked with the **City of Brevard** and Ecusta Trail board members to help support and speed the rail-to-trail development efforts. The goal: to turn the 19.4-mile closed railway corridor into a public greenway connecting Henderson and Transylvania Counties.

The Blue Zones Project Built Environment Committee recommended the project because it would:

- Increase connectivity between existing places and trails already in place such as the Estatoe Trail, Brevard's current multi-use trail, the city and county

sports complex

- Provide easy, safe, comfortable, and equitable access to natural movement, and
- Set the groundwork to help complete the full Ecusta Trail within Transylvania County and connect future trails in the region.

To help advance the work, Blue Zones Project Brevard team members and volunteers wrote letters of support, worked with **Conserving Carolina** and **Friends of Ecusta Trail** to help fund raise, participated in the Brevard/Transylvania County Ecusta Trail Advisory Board, and assisted in seeking out grant funding for the project.

Blue Zones Project - Brevard joined major individual and business donors by contributing \$10,000 to the Ecusta Trail trailhead development, and the city obtained a \$1 million Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant for the final engineering design of the trail.

Work has already begun on the trail with the removal of steel rails and crossties, and removal of the train trestle over the Davidson River was scheduled to begin

in early 2023. According to current projections, the entire project should be completed in 2027.



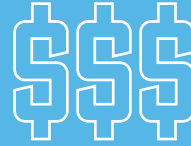


LOCAL BUSINESS

Walkers and bicyclists tend to spend more money at local businesses than drivers. Complete Streets are more accessible to walkers and bikers, which improves traffic to local businesses. Residents are more likely to shop locally along Complete Streets, which invests in local businesses and creates job growth.⁶

42%

Retail sales increase in shops along Hillsborough Street in Raleigh, NC after the area became more friendly to pedestrian and bicycle activity.⁶



COMPLETE STREETS DRIVE ECONOMIC VALUE



PROPERTY VALUES

Walkable communities with tree-lined streets and slowed traffic increase neighborhood desirability and property values. Homes located in very walkable neighborhoods are valued \$4,000 to \$34,000 more than homes in neighborhoods with average walkability.⁷



EMPLOYMENT

Complete Streets projects that add pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure can double the amount of jobs created in an area. Complete Streets projects create 11-14 jobs per \$1 million spent while automobile infrastructure projects create only seven jobs per \$1 million spent.⁸



WALKABLE COMMUNITIES THRIVE

55%

of Americans would rather drive less and walk more.⁹

73%

currently feel they have no choice but to drive as much as they do.⁹

66%

of Americans want more transportation options so they have the freedom to choose how they get where they need to go.⁹

TOBACCO

City policies have a lasting, community-wide impact on shaping our environments to support well-being.

Smoking-related illness in the United States costs more than \$300 billion each year, including nearly \$170 billion for direct medical care and more than \$156 billion in lost productivity¹⁰ Comprehensive community policies can limit exposure to second-hand smoke and lead to lower use of tobacco and e-cigarettes overall.

Despite tobacco use rates running lower than state and national averages, Blue Zones Project - Brevard and local partners knew they could deter smoking at city properties and provide tobacco risk education to the area's youth.

Tobacco cessation. Blue Zones Project - Brevard helped create the **Transylvania County Tobacco Coalition** to expand and sustain smoking-cessation efforts and co-hosted the first Brevard Tobacco Summit. The coalition meets quarterly to facilitate collaboration and introduce new efforts, such as vaping cessation resources. Eight local organizations are committed to participating in these ongoing meetings. Successful reduction in smoking rates has the potential to reduce healthcare costs by nearly \$6,000 per smoker, per year.

Tobacco-free ordinances. With support from Blue Zones Project, the City of Brevard is in the process of passing new policies requiring all city-owned or city-leased properties and vehicles, and for city-sponsored events to become smoke-free. Strong partnerships with local stakeholders have brought technical assistance, policy language review, and signage to assist tobacco priorities in Brevard.

Engaging young people to not start or quit tobacco use. In partnership with **Transylvania County Schools** and **Brevard Academy**, a member of staff of each school in the county

will be committed to providing students tobacco cessation services. To address the rise in e-cigarette use, Blue Zones Project - Brevard introduced and offered VapeEducate cessation curriculum and licenses to the high schools and brought in an anti-vaping youth speaker to share his story with more than 1,700 students.

Going forward, actions like passing city smoking prohibition policy, supporting zoning restrictions for tobacco/vape shops, and supporting Transylvania County Tobacco Coalition efforts to expand into outer-county areas will continue to positively influence reduced tobacco use across the community. **These initiatives will continue to positively influence the rate of tobacco use across Brevard, which is down nearly 30 percent since 2020.**



FOOD

Food policy has the power to improve the availability of produce across neighborhoods.

Collaborative, community-based policies can foster a healthier local food system, improving access and making produce more visible via schools, corner markets, farmers markets, neighborhood gardens, mobile businesses, and more.

It is estimated that by 2030, if current eating and exercise habits remain the same, 86 percent of the American population will be overweight or obese.¹¹

Plate sizes are growing (from 9.5 inches to 12.5 inches over the last century) and so are our appetites: we're eating 27 percent more than we used to!

Food is fuel, and what we eat impacts our productivity too. A 2012 study revealed that unhealthy eating is related to a 66 percent increase in the risk of lost productivity. Health-related employee-productivity loss accounts for 77 percent of all productivity loss and costs employers up to three times more in annual healthcare expenses.¹²

In addition to looking and feeling better, the benefit of healthy eating in the U.S. is a financial one. It's estimated that the economic cost of four nutrition-related chronic diseases between 2011 to 2020 was \$16 trillion (or nearly 9 percent of gross domestic product annually) after accounting for direct health care costs, lost productivity, and lost wages related to obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and as many as 13 types of cancer.¹³ Poor diet is a major risk factor for these serious health conditions, all of which reduce life expectancy.

Blue Zones Project focuses on shaping food policy to increase consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables and ensuring access for all residents.

Known as a haven for hikers, bikers, and waterfall-seekers, Brevard also has an opportunity to become a community where residents and visitors can find fresh, healthy food anywhere and

are able to eat smarter, easier. During Blue Zones Project's three-year transformation phase, we were able to shift the food landscape by creating greater awareness around the benefits of a plant-forward diet and ensuring all residents have access to fresh, healthy foods.

Key Actions and Innovations

- Blue Zones Project – Brevard helped create the **Transylvania County Food Coalition** to serve as a mechanism to assess food needs and focus resources to areas that need help most.
- Awarded an AARP grant to support the new Rosenwald community garden, which is being organized and sustained with help from volunteers and partners like **Gaia Herbs**. The number of community gardens in Brevard doubled, from 4 to 8. In at least one of the city's farmers markets, SNAP assistance is now being accepted to purchase locally grown, healthy food.
- Local restaurants added over 70 delicious Blue Zones-inspired dishes, making healthier eating choices easier while dining out



POLICY: FOOD

- Blue Zones Project cooking demonstrations became part of Wellness Alley along with other partners focused on increasing community well-being. In response to Food Assessment results, these cooking demonstrations were modified to utilize foods distributed by **MANA** and through backpack food programs for school-age kids.

Since 2020, Blue Zones Project – Brevard has hosted 66 healthy cooking classes and 17 potluck Moais, with more than 800 residents participating. **Five policies have been adopted to improve the local food system.** Efforts like these helped contribute to a **61.7 percent drop in high cholesterol rates among adults, which now sit at 6.7 percent,** in our community over a two-year period.



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I’VE BEEN INVOLVED WITH THE BLUE ZONES PROJECT SINCE LAST AUGUST. ADOPTING A PLANT SLANT EATING PLAN HAS IMPROVED MY BLOOD PRESSURE OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS TO THE POINT THAT I NO LONGER NEED TO TAKE BLOOD PRESSURE MEDICATION. MY DOCTOR AND I ARE BOTH DELIGHTED WITH THIS DRAMATIC REDUCTION IN MY RISK OF STROKE AND SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENT IN MY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING.”

Linda Oxford
Brevard resident



In Brevard, a critical mass of worksites, schools, restaurants, and grocery stores have optimized their environments for healthy living.

By working together to make permanent or semi-permanent changes, healthy choices have become the easy choices in all the places we live, work, learn, and play.

PLACES

WORKSITES

Worksites engage employees and support healthy choices.

Employers are in a powerful position to help us move more, eat better, and connect. About one-third of our waking hours are spent at work. Fewer jobs require moderate physical activity, a percentage that has fallen from 50 percent in 1960 to 20 percent today.¹⁵ Some 70 percent of Americans eat at their desk several times a week.¹⁶ As waistlines expand, so do medical costs for employers. Creating healthier work environments can shift that trend, trimming costs and enhancing productivity.

Our community saw 13 worksites take actions to become Blue Zones Project Approved™ worksites, and employees now find it easier to make healthy choices during the workday.

Participating worksites implemented a variety of Blue Zones Project best practices to engage employees. Actions included establishing employee wellness committees and newsletters, improving cafeteria options, creating walking routes around offices, establishing Moais to get colleagues moving together, improving time off policies for volunteering, and more.

Impact of Healthier Work Places

- Worksite well-being improvements in Brevard so far have led to a savings of **\$5.2 million in healthcare costs and workforce productivity.**
- Worker's compensation claims decreased at **Comporium.**
- The central office of **Transylvania County Schools** reported increased movement and nutritional awareness.
- **Fyzical Therapy & Balance Centers** reported a 15 percent uptick in employee volunteering.



WHY IT MATTERS

According to a Quantum Workplace report, employees are 14 percent more engaged when given time off to recharge, 18 percent more engaged when given time for healthy activities, and 10 percent more engaged when provided healthy good options at the workplace.¹⁷



Local Employers Help Staff Eat Better, De-Stress, and Prioritize Mental Well-Being

Worksites in Brevard are investing in the health of their employees and enriching the community they serve.

Gaia Herbs, a Brevard-based natural herb grower and brand, set out to become a Blue Zones Project Approved worksite—and they succeeded! Gaia’s executive leadership team took impressive steps to improve well-being for the organization, which included re-establishing policies for time off to volunteer, implementing healthy vending and food menus for employees, and a reinvigoration of the company’s volunteering and community impact efforts. Gaia Herbs plans to continue using the Blue Zones Project blueprint as it pursues its mission to create a happier and healthier community through farm events, wellness challenges, and wellness education.

As Blue Zones Project – Brevard’s primary sponsor, **Pisgah Health Foundation** has led by example, becoming Brevard’s very first Blue Zones Project Approved worksite. Making more healthy foods

available onsite was a definite priority, as was expanding outdoor eating space for employee breaks, more daily built-in micro breaks for recharging, and more availability of stand-up desks. The staff at Pisgah Health Foundation has truly embraced Blue Zones Project and the Power 9.

Transylvania Vocational Services, the county’s largest private manufacturing employer, is showing its commitment to the health of its staff by providing more opportunities for healthy movement and eating throughout the day. The company initiated a popular and successful Walking Moai and overhauled its vending machines to include a larger variety of healthy snack options. TVS has also created a sustainable wellness committee that meets monthly and hosts engaging well-being workshops.



WE ARE COMMITTED TO PROVIDING A FOUNDATION OF WELLNESS NOT ONLY IN BREVARD, BUT FOR ALL COMMUNITIES. SOCIAL IMPACT IS AT THE HEART OF OUR WORK AS WE EMPOWER COMMUNITIES TO LEARN HOW TO USE AND CULTIVATE HERBS. BLUE ZONES APPROVAL REFLECTS OUR LONGSTANDING COMMITMENT TO WELLNESS THROUGH HIGH-QUALITY, EVIDENCE-BACKED PRODUCTS, AS WELL AS THE FRUITS OF OUR RECENT SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY EFFORTS.

Alison Czczuga
Director of Social Impact and Sustainability
Gaia Herbs

”

BECOMING A BLUE ZONES APPROVED WORKSITE IS A GREAT WAY TO CONNECT WITH OUR COMMUNITY AND SHOW OUR COMMITMENT TO THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF OUR EMPLOYEES. IT IS IMPORTANT TO TVS AND OUR MISSION TO CONTINUE PROVIDING EMPLOYEES AND SERVICE RECIPIENTS WITH HEALTHY LIFESTYLE OPTIONS AND STAYING CONNECTED WITH OUR COMMUNITY.

Jamie Brandenburg
CEO
Transylvania Vocational Services





WELL-BEING SAVES EVERYONE MONEY



THRIVE, DON'T SUFFER

For employees with the highest levels of well-being — those with the highest scores in the “thriving” category — the cost of lost productivity is only \$840 a year. Among the “suffering” employees — those with the lowest scores in the “thriving” category — the annual per person cost of lost productivity due to sick days is \$28,800.¹⁸



WHAT IS DISEASE BURDEN?

Disease burden cost is how much money a person spends due to disease, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, back pain, diabetes, depression/anxiety, and sleep apnea/insomnia.¹⁸



IT PAYS TO BE HAPPY

Respondents in the “thriving” category averaged \$4,929 per person annually in disease burden cost versus \$6,763 a year for respondents in the struggling and suffering categories. For an organization with 1,000 workers, thriving employees would cost their employers \$1.8 million less every year. Furthermore, the average annual new disease burden cost for people who are thriving is \$723, compared with \$1,488 for those who are struggling or suffering.¹⁸

SCHOOLS

Area schools get students moving and learning more.

Schools can shape healthy habits for life. Over the past 40 years, rates of obesity among children have soared. **Approximately 25 million children and adolescents (more than 33 percent) are now overweight or obese, or at the risk of becoming so.**¹⁹ Physical activity and stretch breaks during the school day can improve grades, increase concentration, and raise math, reading, and writing test scores.²⁰ Simple changes in lunchroom design can entice students toward healthier choices.²¹

Across Brevard, six schools earned the designation Blue Zones Project Approved.

Schools implemented policies and introduced food options that encourage healthy eating on campus, integrated physical activity into the day, and incorporated other Blue Zones Project principles into the curriculum and campus space.

Impact of Healthier Schools

- **Brevard High School** and **Davidson River School** both reported significant improvement in absenteeism.

- **Brevard Academy** (a dual Blue Zones Project Approved worksite and school) has seen a decrease in disciplinary incidents and utilized their approved status to help earn grants for additional funding, including a Garden Grant Expansion and NC Green Power Solar Grant.
- Blue Zones Project - Brevard and **Transylvania County Public Schools** presented a half-day plant slant cooking class for all cafeteria managers, demonstrating recipes and ideas that could easily be added into their daily lunch offerings. Students throughout the district now have new healthy options to choose from during mealtime.
- **Brevard Elementary School** celebrated national Walk to School Day with a Walking School Bus, bringing together students, parents, pets, and school staff to provide a fun way to move naturally at the start of the day.



WALKING HELPS KIDS

Children who walk to school are more alert and ready to learn, strengthen their social networks and develop lifetime fitness habits.^{22, 23}



”

BLUE ZONES PROJECT HAS GREATLY ASSISTED BREVARD HIGH SCHOOL IN LEARNING, LISTENING, AND REFINING HOW OUR STUDENTS AND STAFF ENGAGE WITH THEMSELVES AND OTHERS THROUGH THE SCHOOL AND IN OUR COMMUNITY IN A MORE POSITIVE MANNER.

Scott Strickler
Principal
Brevard High School



Teach Them Early, Teach Them Well

Brevard Academy, a free public K-8 charter school in Transylvania County, already had a solid focus on the health and well-being of its students. But their work with Blue Zones Project has greatly expanded their desire and ability to impact the lives of students and their families, as well as its faculty.

The school created the one and only Blue Zones Interact (in partnership with the **Rotary Club of Pisgah Forest**), which teaches leadership through well-being concepts and work. The club also serves as Brevard Academy's first student government.

Wellness policies were rethought and overhauled, creating a healthier environment for students. Of course, teachers and school staff need support, too. A wellness committee was created for them, a nursing mothers policy was instituted, and all positions were Living Wage Certified.

Key Actions and Innovations

- The school discontinued the practices of using food as a reward, withholding physical activity as a punishment, and hosting unhealthy fundraisers.
- A Blue Zones Project-supported grant from Pisgah Forest Rotary was used to expand the school garden.
- To expose students to healthier foods and give them more choices, Blue Zones-aligned items were added to the school's daily menu.
- Transitioned from a more traditional recess to offering multiple move naturally sessions throughout the school day.
- Added a wellness Wednesday—Well-Being Pride—to promote healthier habits and activities.

The steps taken earned Brevard Academy dual designation as both a Blue Zones Project Approved school and worksite.

Because of this work, **more than 400 Brevard Academy students are going to school in an environment that better support their mental, physical, and social well-being.**



RESTAURANTS

Restaurant meals can weigh us down or lift us up.

The typical American entrée weighs in at 1,000 calories.²⁴ For the average adult, eating one meal away from home per week translates to gaining about two additional pounds a year. Evidence indicates people appreciate healthy changes. In a five-year study of sales at U.S. restaurant chains, those that increased their better-for-you/low-calorie servings saw a 5.5 percent increase in same-store sales, while those that did not suffered a 5.5 percent decrease.²⁵

With nearly one-half of every food dollar spent on food prepared outside the home, it's important that restaurants make it easier for their customers to make the healthy choice by offering healthy entrees.

Residents and visitors of Brevard now have eight Blue Zones Project Approved restaurants to choose from, and more than 70 Blue Zones-inspired dishes to enjoy.

In these restaurants, patrons may find smaller portion and split-plate options, healthier offerings highlighted through signage and staff-

customer interactions, expanded use of local produce, and more.

At the **Sunrise Cafe**, you can now order one of five new Blue Zones-inspired dishes off the menu, and healthier items like sourdough bread, whole-grain wraps, and plant-based “sausage.” As a result, sales have increased, and the cafe catered its first plant-based wedding.

Katina Hansen, the owner of **Blue Ridge Bakery**—Brevard’s very first Blue Zones Project Approved restaurant—built a whole new menu with Eat Wisely principles from the Power 9 firmly in mind. Guests to her Main Street bakery and cafe will find an array of delicious plant-based items to choose from, but they may also find Hansen out in the community teaching cooking classes to adults and students at Blue Zones Project events.



WE KNOW THAT MANY OF OUR CUSTOMERS ARE LOOKING FOR HEALTHIER OPTIONS. WE HAD BEEN TRYING TO CREATE NEW AND FRESH ALTERNATIVES AND WANT OUR COMMUNITY TO KNOW WE WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT THEM IN THEIR HEALTH.

Katina Hansen
Owner
Blue Ridge Bakery



”

WE WERE REALLY EXCITED TO JOIN THE BLUE ZONES PROJECT MOVEMENT. WE HAD A FEW ITEMS ON OUR MENU, BUT BY ADDING MORE WE'VE INCREASED OUR HEALTHIER OPTIONS. SINCE OUR BLUE ZONES PROJECT APPROVAL, WE'VE BOOKED SEVERAL CATERINGS THAT INCLUDE NEW HEALTHY OPTIONS. IT'S BEEN FUN AND EXCITING TO SEE THE GROWTH IN OUR COMPANY AND OTHERS. WE ARE SO PROUD TO BE PART OF BLUE ZONES PROJECT - BREVARD.

Marisa Gariglio
Owner
Sunrise Cafe



GROCERY STORES

Local grocery stores promote healthy foods and cooking skills.

Grocery stores influence food decisions. The actions we take to determine what we eat begin at the store. **About 60 percent of the food we purchase is highly processed, fatty, salty, or sugary.**²⁶ Grocery store promotions and design layout can influence those choices for the better.

In the U.S., healthy eating could generate an estimated savings of \$114.5 billion per year through reduced medical costs, increased productivity, and decline in heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, and osteoporotic hip fractures.²⁷

Americans visit the grocery store almost twice a week on average, and their food choices impact their health and productivity. The design of many grocery stores and the deals they promote often point people to unhealthy foods. Blue Zones Project - Brevard created awareness around these issues, and a local grocer took steps to offer healthy food education opportunities to customers and made design, display, and promotional changes that point people toward produce, whole grains, locally

grown foods, and other healthy buys.

Food Matters Market is a small grocer in Brevard that supports local producers and sells healthy food grown in the region. The store became the first grocery store to gain approved status by taking committed actions to make healthy food choices easier for customers: like creating a Blue Zones Project recipe station with ingredients, stocking healthy grab-and-go's, and creating a dedicated Blue Zones checkout lane full of healthy options like fresh fruit and nuts.

Food Matters Market takes its mission out into the community by partnering with other wellness-oriented organizations for events, sponsoring healthy foods for Blue Zones Project youth organizations, and creating a donation account for Blue Zones Project - Brevard to use for any youth-oriented food need.

Going forward, the store plans to continue to working with local partners on community outreach and events, clearly showing how committed they are to improving the well-being of their community.



WHY IT MATTERS

Sixty percent of purchases are unplanned. Placing attractive produce or other healthy products at the front of the store, at the deli, or at the checkout area can encourage “impulse” purchase of these healthy items.²⁸



”

FOOD MATTERS MARKET IS VERY PROUD TO BE AN OFFICIAL PART OF THE BLUE ZONES PROJECT IN BREVARD. WE ARE SO PROUD TO BE THE FIRST BLUE ZONES PROJECT APPROVED GROCERY STORE IN ALL THE CAROLINAS. SO MANY OF OUR VALUES ALIGN WITH THOSE OF BLUE ZONES PROJECT THAT IT MADE IT AN EASY DECISION FOR US TO WORK TOWARDS APPROVAL. WE ARE HERE TO SERVE OUR COMMUNITY HEALTHY AND LOCAL FOOD OPTIONS ALONG WITH EDUCATION TO HELP OUR CUSTOMERS LEAD THE LIFESTYLES THEY ARE LOOKING FOR. WE ARE EXCITED TO BE WORKING HAND-IN-HAND WITH BLUE ZONES PROJECT AS WE MOVE TOWARDS A HEALTHIER AND HAPPIER BREVARD, NORTH CAROLINA.

Jeff Bannister
COO
Food Matters Market



A photograph of three women in a kitchen setting, all wearing blue t-shirts with the 'Blue Zones Project' logo. The woman on the left has short white hair and is smiling. The woman in the middle has dark hair and is also smiling. The woman on the right has dark hair and is smiling while holding a wooden spoon over a pot. The t-shirts have the text 'BLUE ZONES PROJECT' in white and 'WE' LONGER BETTER.' in yellow, with 'BREVARD, NC' in white below. The background shows a kitchen with a white wall and some framed items.

PEOPLE

Blue Zones Project encourages people to optimize their homes and social environments, provides opportunities for individuals to discover meaning at Purpose Workshops, facilitates volunteer experiences to help people connect with the community, and offers programs that deliver support through healthy social networks.

Strong Social Connections Help Residents Move More, Eat Better, Connect, and Downshift

Our connections to friends, family, and those around us are very powerful. They can shape our lives in more ways than we realize.

Research shows that even your friends' friends' friends—people you don't even know—can affect your health, happiness, and behaviors.²⁹

People of all ages, cultures, and backgrounds in Brevard have come together to create positive change in their community through Blue Zones Project. From the program launch in 2019 to community certification in 2023:

5,000+

individuals involved in the project.

450+

residents donated their time, skills, and passions toward volunteer opportunities tracked as part of Blue Zones Project.

850+

residents participated in Purpose Workshops to rediscover and apply their gifts in their daily lives.

333

people met up with a Walking Moai for connecting to move naturally together.

786

individuals attended a plant-based cooking class.



WHAT'S A MOAI?

Moai is a concept from Okinawa, Japan, that roughly means coming together for a common purpose. When you find your Moai, you find your personal board of directors — a committed group of individuals supporting each other and working collectively to improve well-being, for life.



THE RESULTS ARE IN

Measures from the Sharecare Community Well-Being Index reveal the impact:

- Physical activity is up 7.9 percent since 2020 (the number of people who report exercising 30+ minutes, 3+ days/week)
- Health risks like high blood pressure and high cholesterol have decreased by 9.4 percent and 61.7 percent respectively
- More residents—14.1 percent more—report “thriving” in their life evaluation, and 6.3 percent more residents say they have someone in their lives encouraging them to be healthy

PEOPLE

The world's longest-lived people in blue zones areas have always understood the power of social connectedness. In Okinawa, "Moais"—groups of about five people who commit to each other for life—provide social connection, emotional, and sometimes financial support in times of need. Moai members have the stress-shedding security of knowing there is always someone there for them.

Spending time with people who positively influence one another is crucial. In Brevard, we embrace the power of social connections to bring citizens together through groups, clubs, and community organizations.

Move more. More than 25 Walking Moais were created throughout the community, building long-lasting friendships while exploring our community on foot.

Eat better. Cooking classes and demonstrations brought individuals together to learn to cook new plant-based dishes. **Over 786 residents attended a plant-based cooking demonstration.**

Connect and have the right outlook. Blue zones centenarians also put an emphasis on connecting with their reason for being. Whether

through family, career, or community, living with purpose pays off. Blue Zones researchers have found that people who have a clear sense of purpose in life tend to live about seven years longer than those who don't.³

Through volunteering, Purpose Workshops, and Purpose Moais, Blue Zones Project - Brevard encourages individuals to discover their innate gifts. We help our community members match their passions and commitment to volunteer opportunities that deepen their sense of purpose.

More than 850 people sought to discover their gifts at a Purpose Workshop and put their skills to work by giving back to Brevard through volunteer work. **With nearly 4,000 hours donated, some 454 recurring volunteers in Brevard have generated more than \$119,000 in value for the community.**³⁰

Today, **73.6 percent of Brevard residents report they are thriving in life, compared to just 64.5 percent in 2020.**



BY THE NUMBERS

More than **4500 Brevard residents** attended educational events focused on well-being



”

WALKING WITH MY MOAI IS A MIND-BODY-SPIRIT WORKOUT! I LOVE THE CAMARADERIE AND CONNECTION, LEARNING ABOUT NEW PLACES AND WALKING TRAILS, THE SUPPORT I RECEIVE FROM MY FELLOW WALKERS, AND THE EMOTIONAL BOOST I GET FROM BEING OUTDOORS. IT'S DEFINITELY A HIGHLIGHT OF MY WEEK!

Renee Peterson Trudeau
Walking Moai Member



Plant-Based Cooking Catches Fire

Eating together makes a big difference. Obesity is associated with significantly increased risk of more than 20 chronic diseases and health conditions that cause devastating consequences and increased mortality.

Adolescents who eat dinner with their families are 15 percent less likely to become obese.³¹ A report by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse points out that teens who eat dinner with their families more than three times a week are less likely to do poorly in school.³²

Plant-based cooking demonstrations attracted interest from people of all ages and skill levels across Brevard, providing the opportunity to learn how to prepare fresh, healthy, and delicious meals with plant-based ingredients.

A growing demand among locals for healthier fare, combined with the dedication of creative chefs and culinary teachers passionate about sharing healthier options sparked and fueled the success of this program, which translated seamlessly online during the pandemic.

Cooking demonstration volunteers like **Kathy Brannan, Vicki Held, Katina Hansen**, and many others lent their time and talents to Blue Zones Project by conducting healthy cooking classes, inspired by their unique culinary backgrounds.

Reaching hundreds of residents was a true community collaboration. Partnerships with members of the School Nutrition Management Team at **Transylvania County Public Schools** and schools like **Pisgah Forest Elementary School** and **Davidson River School** created opportunities for volunteer chefs to introduce healthier options into school cafeterias and teaching students the joys of cooking.

Offering free monthly cooking classes open to the public provided access to large, diverse

audiences, enabling chefs to connect with many participants at one time. It also served as a way for cooking enthusiasts like **Randy and Kathy Theis** to share personal stories about their transition to plant slant eating and recipes that helped them along their journey with attendees.

Recipes from Brevard’s chefs also reached audiences in Western North Carolina through regular features on WLOS TV 13’s cooking show “Carolina Kitchen” and in the bestselling cookbook—*The Blue Zones American Kitchen*, released in 2022.



Purpose Helps Find Light in Darkness

Blue Zones Project - Brevard was set to celebrate its public launch in the spring of 2020. Unfortunately, so was a certain global health crisis: the COVID-19 pandemic.

Staff and volunteers quickly pivoted and found a way to move all Purpose Workshops online. Many people, particularly isolated seniors, said that the dynamic outreach and the methods learned in the workshops helped them survive the confusion and hopelessness of the pandemic. Since then, the Blue Zones Project - Brevard engagement team has offered one public Purpose Workshop every month, as well as private workshops for organizations, businesses, churches, and schools in the Brevard area. All told, **66 free Purpose Workshops have been offered, with more than 850 people exploring what feeds their souls** and gives them satisfaction and joy.

Eventually, two Purpose Moai groups were formed, meeting for 10 weeks virtually, and then—by popular demand—continuing 10 more weeks in person. At the time of publishing, 11 different Purpose Moais have

been formed with a total of 110 weeks of connecting. Out of these support groups came many new friendships, and several pivotal life decisions. One member decided to retire early, another is now writing a book, and a third launched a non-profit!

After a personal loss left her feeling down and disconnected, mental health therapist **Sarah Yontz** joined a Purpose Moai on a whim. She felt safe and comfortable in the group, allowing her to look closely at her life and try to find ways to infuse it with more joy. She found the support she needed to accept and work her way through the grieving process, and eventually she noticed being filled with a greater sense of happiness.

Stories of Success

- **The Ladies Moai Group**, one of the last to graduate from the 10-week program, continues to meet once a month for hikes, retreats, and dinners. They also volunteer together for Blue Zones Project-sponsored community events like National Night Out, Saturday Splash Day at Parks & Rec, and the Thrive Transylvania Health & Wellness Expo.

- Blue Zones Project has worked with Transylvania County public high schools to ensure that every senior is exposed to the concept of purpose and participates in a Purpose Workshop. Plans are underway to bring the program to middle schoolers as well.
- The Blue Zones Project - Brevard staff presented a Purpose Workshop to all of the **Brevard Academy** staff and teachers on a teacher development day. It was reported by one attendee to be, “fun, moving, and team bonding all in one!” Brevard Academy is now an Blue Zones Project Approved school and worksite.
- Discussions at the end of each Purpose Workshop recount how Purpose Moais have changed lives in the Brevard community. Workshop attendees are asked to sign up for the next Purpose Moai and are encouraged to personally recruit family and friends to find their purpose and joy just like they did!



”

I WANTED TO DELVE DEEPER INTO MY PURPOSE. WHY AM I HERE...WHAT DO I STILL HAVE TO DO...AM I LIVING THE BEST VERSION OF MYSELF? TIME [IN A PURPOSE MOAI] ALLOWED ME TO BE LASER FOCUSED ON WHAT WAS IMPORTANT TO ME. IT HELPED ME FIND CLARITY ON MY PERSONAL JOURNEY. WHAT MAKES ME FEEL HAPPY, SATISFIED, AND LIVING MY BEST LIFE.”

Dan Medhi
Purpose Workshop Attendee and Purpose Moai Member



Volunteers Give Back to Community, Find New Friends

Volunteers are at the heart of any community initiative. Research shows that people who give back experience better overall health, greater life satisfaction, higher self-esteem, and a greater ability to manage their own chronic illnesses. Donating your time and energy to your community can even reduce your risk of high blood pressure, depression, and chronic pain.³³

Vicki Held first learned about the world's blue zones in 2017 while on a hike through the Dolomites in Northern Italy. Her interest piqued, Vicki continued reading and learning more after returning home. When Blue Zones Project came to Brevard in 2019, she knew she wanted to be involved.

Over the past three years, Vicki has become Blue Zones Project - Brevard's "hostess with the mostess," volunteering her time to serve on the project's Engagement Committee, teaching free cooking classes, and leading one of the community's first Walking

Moai groups. "I love to tell the Blue Zones story," said Vicki. "I am very proud of our accomplishments in the community."

Dawn Dominique turned up at a Blue Zones Project Purpose Workshop before she moved to Brevard. One Purpose Workshop turned into two, and then Dawn joined a 10-week Purpose Moai after relocating to the city. Connecting to her new community, and having a passion for helping others discover their own purpose, led to Dawn volunteering as a Purpose Workshop facilitator and Moai leader. She also volunteered to help with Blue Zones Project booths at community events and her positive, purposeful energy vibrates wherever she goes.

Three Rotary groups in Brevard banded together to form the BZP Rotary Collaborative, with members from **The Rotary Club of Pisgah Forest**, **Rotary Club of Brevard**, and the **Cedar Mountain Satellite Club**. Rotary's motto, "Service Above Self," brings members together in communities around the world. In Brevard, more than 80 Rotarians leveraged Blue Zones principles to help make our community healthier and stronger.





GOOD FRIENDS AND FAMILY MAKE EVERYTHING BETTER



FRIENDS ALWAYS SHARE

Friends provide more than good times, memories, and companionship — they also share health habits and other traits with one another. Did you know that if your friends are smokers, unhappy, or obese, you're more likely to adopt these same traits? You are twice as likely to be overweight if your three closest friends are overweight,³⁴ and inversely, you are 20 percent more likely to succeed at new behaviors if you do them with a buddy.³⁵



SOCIAL WELL-BEING

The amount of time you spend socializing each day has a direct impact on your well-being. To have a good day, a person needs around six hours of socializing. So, get connecting!³⁶



EAT TOGETHER BETTER

Adolescents who eat dinner with their family are 15 percent less likely to become obese. Additionally, a report by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse points out that teens who eat dinner with their families more than three times a week are less likely to do poorly in school.³²



DON'T GO AT IT ALONE

It's getting harder to be connected. In 2004, 25 percent of Americans felt they had no one to confide in. A lack of social connectedness leaves people vulnerable to depression, anxiety, and other anti-social behaviors.³⁶ Social isolation and feelings of loneliness can increase the chance of premature death by 14 percent — nearly double the risk of premature death from obesity.³⁷

CONCLUSION

WITH GRATITUDE

Blue Zones Project - Brevard is a testament to the effectiveness of collective impact. We have seen tremendous improvement in the health and well-being of our community and its residents over the past three-and-a-half years.

The improvements we've seen would not have been possible without the passion and dedication of hundreds of volunteers, dozens of organizations, and our sponsor: PISGAH Health Foundation.

Thank you to every community leader, committee member, volunteer, ambassador, community partner, and organization for the countless hours invested, not just in the work of Blue Zones Project, but in making Brevard a healthier place to live, work, learn, and play.

Thank you for believing in the dream of a healthier community, and for putting your passions and resources to work. Because of you, Brevard is experiencing tremendous well-being improvement, and we've set the foundation for continued success in the years ahead.



POWERED BY:



CONCLUSION

If there's one thing the story of Blue Zones Project - Brevard demonstrates, it's that many people and many organizations play an essential part in community success. Those recognized here contributed significant time, effort, and resources to the cause. Special thanks to these leaders—and applause to all who continue to help make Brevard a healthier, happier community.

Steering Committee (Past & Present)

Cathleen Blanchard	Morris Jenkins	Dave Neumann
Frances Bradburn	David Joyce	Carrie Norris
Shelia Carland	Lynne Joyce	Billy Parrish
Lani Callison	Page Lemel	Dee Dee Perkins
Maureen Copelof	Lori McCall	Jamie Ramsey
Rik Emaus	Glenda McCarson	Belinda Roberts
Jim Fatland	William Mills	Elaine Russell
Barbara Grimm	Gordon Murray	Mark Weinstein
Vicki Held	Mac Morrow	Alice Wellborn
Beth Hyatt	Judy Nebrig	Ora Wells



CONCLUSION

Blue Zones Project - Brevard Staff (Past & Present)

Mark Burrows

Sarah Hankey

Tammy Hopkins

Trent Humphreys

Charlotte Shackelford

Special Thanks

Blue Zones Project Steering Committee

Blue Zones Project Community Engagement Committee

Blue Zones Project Participating Organization Committee

Blue Zones Project Policy Committee

Blue Zones Project Retail Food Committee

Blue Zones Project Schools Committee

Blue Zones Project Worksite Committee

Community planners and elected officials who are implementing best practices to make our community safer for pedestrians, cyclists, and cars

Champions who led the work in over 70 organizations that are making healthy choices easier for those they serve and our many ambassadors who say “yes!” to well-being



CONGRATS, BREVARD!

A PROUD BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY

We did this together. By putting our personal and collective well-being first, we're making healthy choices easier, creating more economic opportunities, and ensuring a better quality of life for everyone. **Here's to making Brevard one of the healthiest communities in the nation, where residents are living better, together.**



APPENDIX Designated Organizations

Blue Zones Worksites

Brevard Academy
Brevard Music Center
City of Brevard
Comporium
Fisher Realty
Fyzical Therapy & Balance Centers
Gaia Herbs
Hendersonville Pediatrics
Keystone Camp
Pisgah Health Foundation
Transylvania County School District
TVS
Water Oak Dental

Blue Zones Schools

Brevard Academy
Brevard High School
Cindy Platt Boys & Girls Club
Davidson River School
Rosman High School
Rosman Middle School

Blue Zones Restaurants

Blue Ridge Bakery
Cup & Saucer
Kingdom Harvest Wellness & Wine Café
KTCHN
Morning Social
Rocky's Grill & Soda Shop
Sunrise Cafe

Blue Zones Grocery Stores

Food Matters Market

Participating Organizations

Blue Ridge Quick Print
Body + Brain Granola
Brevard Clay
Brevard Rock Gym
Brevard Seventh-day Adventist Church
C2 Life
Connesstee Falls POA
Fitness Factory
Jamesons Joy
Mountain Sun Community School
Nature Hollow
Pescados
Quixotes

Rise & Shine Neighbors in Ministry
Sharing House
Southern Quality Company
TC Arts Council
The Haven
Transylvania Blue Zones Rotary
Collaborative
WSQL White Squirrel Radio

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APPENDIX

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