Despite recent economic growth in the Charlotte region, a 2013 Harvard University/UC Berkeley study revealed that Charlotte ranked 50th out of 50 in economic mobility among the largest U.S. cities. In August of 2017, Building Uplifted Families (BUF), a community collaboration between Renaissance West Community Initiative, Novant Health, Atrium Health, UNC Charlotte, and Mecklenburg County Public Health, was awarded a $250,000 BUILD Health Challenge grant to improve the health and overall well-being of residents in the Renaissance West service area and neighbors along Charlotte’s West Boulevard corridor. The collaborative vision includes strengthening local partnerships among employers, educational organizations, and health systems, and advancing the financial stability and quality of life of residents. Through BUF, Life Navigators are assigned to residents who show interest in case management. Life Navigators seek to collectively improve the quality of life for individuals and their families. They help residents navigate difficult life challenges and progress toward personal goals through information, education, advocacy, and life planning services.

AIM: To improve upward mobility by addressing disparities, enhancing local community capacity, and improving access to preventative health services.

About the Renaissance West Community Initiative

Renaissance West Community Initiative (RWCI) is the non-profit organization that led the revitalization of the former Boulevard Homes public housing site into a vibrant village called The Renaissance. The initiative uses a holistic community redevelopment approach, focusing on multiple critical factors, including mixed-income housing, educational opportunities, youth and adult development programs, health and wellness services and commercial investment. The mission of RWCI is to promote a collaborative community centered on quality housing, education, health, wellness, and opportunity. The Renaissance West Community includes The Residences at Renaissance and Little Rock Apartments, which house over 1300 individuals.

The Building Uplifted Families initiative is guided by the five principles of the BUILD Health Challenge:

**Bold:** This effort seeks to identify novel solutions and to re-engineer existing processes and structures associated with the determinants of health. This project will increase residential capacity to advocate for changes to address whole person health. Needs for more efficient transportation to connect residents to health services and job training, will be presented to political leaders and the Charlotte Area Transportation System in particular. By tackling employment, transportation, and healthcare, the project can have greater systems level impact.

**Upstream:** BUF focuses on the relationship between health outcomes and upstream drivers (social, environmental, and economic factors) that have greatest influence on the health of the Renaissance West Community residents. Through cross-sector collaboration, it moves "health" away from a clinical understanding to an ecological one that links the individual to interpersonal, organizational, community, and public policy issues (e.g., the initiative seeks to increase family stability by working with caregivers to achieve their personal goals in education and employment).

**Integrated:** BUF aligns the practices and perspectives of local partners under a shared vision, establishing new roles while continuing to draw upon the strengths of each partner. Under this initiative, traditionally competitive healthcare systems have jointly pledged financial support and personnel commitment. Data-sharing agreements have been established among partnering organizations. Residents have provided input and enthusiastically supported enhancing health-related activities. A Partnership Advisory Board serves as the nexus for both traditional and emerging roles.

**Local:** Community engagement is a core component of RWCI’s services and BUF. Staff members and partners are dedicated to engaging residents and community leaders by building trusting relationships, understanding, and support. BUF increases the capacity of residents and leaders in charging the course for family stability and neighborhood renewal. Residents have the leading voice in solving family and community issues by helping to determine strategies for effectively addressing them.

**Data-driven:** Data from both clinical and community sources will be collected and shared between partnering organizations to identify key needs, measure meaningful change, and facilitate transparency among stakeholders to generate actionable insight. Process and outcome data is collected across three ecological levels: community, organizational, and individual.

Data is being captured via formative, process, and summative evaluations. Outcomes associated with project aims will be measured at three ecological levels: community, organizational, and individual. Example outcomes include: quality of life, use of medical home and family planning services, attitudes and knowledge about local health services, number of residents trained to be community health coaches, and parental engagement at on-site child development center and school.

With effective implementation and sustained efforts bold, upstream, integrated, local, and data-driven outcomes are expected. This approach is nested in the BUILD Community Framework, a model for improving social, economic, and environmental factors that influence health outcomes (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. BUILD Community Level Framework

![Image](image.png)

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