

# FLiP

By: Lynn E. Merenda

## How Hillsborough’s High School Students Have **FLIPPED** Over Potential Planning Careers

In 2015, our Planning Commissioners challenged us to broaden our public education program with the intent of increasing our community presence and an understanding of what Plan Hillsborough does.

With much of our public engagement already receiving awards and best practice recognition at the regional, state, and national levels, we challenged ourselves to give back to the community – especially in communities of concern – even when we were not in an outreach project phase. And, since so many planners are not exposed to the career until making graduate education choices, we made it our mission to expose students to our profession in high school.

Our **Future Leaders in Planning (FLiP)** program is designed to introduce high school students in grades 9, 10, and 11 (12 if space available) to planning as a potential career. Selected students embark on tours on foot, bus, streetcar, and boat to experience a variety of speakers, presentations, and hands-on planning activities to gain a broad exposure to planning.

**Think big but start small.** We launched **FLiP 2016** with nine students for a two-day program. **FLiP 2017** added a day of programming and doubled the number of students participating. **FLiP 2018** grew to 21 students for four days of programming. Highlights include:

- Walking tours of award-winning Tampa Riverwalk, WaterWorks Park, and Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park
- Tampa International Airport economic development, sustainability and master plan, plus behind the scenes baggage-handling tour



- University of South Florida – campus master plan and sustainability walking tour, CUTR and MURP educational pathways & more
- HART MetroRapid and Tampa Streetcar rides, plus a streetcar expansion study presentation (1<sup>st</sup> time for many on public transit!)
- City of Plant City - planning for a small city and presentations and walking tour
- Environmental Protection Commission air, water, wetlands, and waste division talks with tours of air, benthic, and chemistry labs
- Port Tampa Bay master plan and economic development boat tour
- MacDill Air Force Base planning – presented by base planner and Planning Commissioner Tony Rodriguez
- Historic Ybor City: Then, Now and Tomorrow walking tour
- ULI Tampa Bay Building Healthy Communities presentation & interactive planning exercise for Ybor City

To encourage participation and inclusivity for students of all backgrounds, **FLiP** is FREE for participants. Our first step was to find the right partners. Our initial partner, **Hillsborough County Public Schools**, has direct access to the student body and provides transportation to destinations beyond our public transportation system. **ULI**

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**Tampa Bay** shared an interest in expanding their student education programming locally. Over the years, they've supplied a fantastic interactive planning program, books, FLiP T-shirts, and even meals for the students. The **APA Florida Sun Coast Section** and private planning firms have also sponsored student meals. This year, we are welcoming an additional **FLiP** sponsor - **Kisinger Campo & Associates**.

**FLiP** has been a huge success in the eyes of students and parents, who attend the closing planning activity presentation for the student teams. Parents and staff are always impressed with how much the students learn in just a few days. The students evaluate the program, rating every phase and commenting on if they are now considering a career in planning. We've received many thank you notes and feedback that we are changing the course of these students' lives. The best part is, each now knows what a comprehensive plan and a long-range transportation plan is, and that all citizens can be actively engaged in the planning process, regardless of their educational or career pursuits.

Learn more about the FLiP program, video, and pictures linked at: [planhillsborough.org/flip](http://planhillsborough.org/flip)  
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# #FLiPlanning

inspiring future planners