

Plan4Health: Trenton Healthy Communities Initiative

Trenton, NJ

SUMMARY

Plan4Health connects communities across the country, funding work at the intersection of planning and public health. Anchored by American Planning Association (APA) Chapters and American Public Health Association (APHA) Affiliates, Plan4Health supports creative partnerships to build sustainable, cross-sector coalitions. Through collaboration, Trenton (New Jersey) Healthy Communities Initiative seeks to address built environment impediments to physical activity and healthy diet. Strategies include promoting a health focus in local decision making and advancing the creation of a health and food systems master plan as well as increasing health literacy among residents.



CHALLENGE

Trenton, New Jersey faces a range of challenges related to physical activity and nutrition. Nearly 50 percent of Trenton children are overweight or obese, with more than one in four children considered obese in every age category. Lack of exercise is compounded by a high prevalence of sedentary activity among Trenton's youth. For instance, 34 percent of children ages three to 18 spend more than two hours a day on weekdays in front of screens, with Trenton boys

(40 percent) and adolescents (41 percent) more likely to do so. Trenton is also a food desert, with only three supermarkets located in the city. Food insecurity affects one in five Trenton households, with 17 percent of Trenton households regularly lacking enough food to eat. 22 percent of kids ages three to 18 eat less than one full serving of vegetables daily and 40 percent do not eat enough fruit.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

Please reach out to the City of Trenton to learn more about the master plan and how you can share your thoughts and ideas.

Not from Trenton? Consider contacting your local planning agency to see what is happening in your community.

To learn more about the Trenton Healthy Communities Initiative and all coalitions participating in Plan4Health, visit: www.plan4health.us and join the national conversation at the intersection of planning and public health on social media by using and following #plan4health.

"The re-emergence of public health into the planning could possibly be the most important work APA has embarked on in decades. This initiative will highlight how the physical and mental health of communities is inextricably woven into the land use and infrastructure plans."

- Charles Latini, Jr., AICP, PP
President, American Planning Association – New Jersey Chapter

Contact

Jennifer Senick

Executive Director

Rutgers Center for Green Building

Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

33 Livingston Avenue - Room 158

New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901

P: 848-932-2904

E: jsenick@rci.rutgers.edu

www.greenbuilding.rutgers.edu

SOLUTION

The Trenton Healthy Communities Initiative is leveraging the city's development of a master plan by adopting and implementing a Health and Food System Element (HFSE) to be included in the plan. Working closely with the City of Trenton as well as with Rutgers University and community-based organizations, notably the Trenton Health Team, a collaborative of area healthcare providers, local nonprofits and the Trenton City Department of Health and Human Services, the coalition is committed to increasing the partnership between planning and public health—and to creating a transferable framework to be used in plans across the state.

RESULTS

During the initial project period, the Trenton Healthy Communities Initiative has engaged local decision-makers. Starting the conversation with officials has kept the importance of the Health and Food System Element (HFSE) in focus, ensuring early buy-in and commitment from key stakeholders. The coalition has also conducted a comprehensive assessment and literature review to identify models that could be adapted for Trenton, recognizing that it's not a one-size fits-all process. Finding the strategies that meet the needs of Trenton will increase the chances of successful implementation of the HFSE. Established leaders in New Jersey, the core coalition members—APA, APHA, and Rutgers University—bring strong networks and thoughtful collaboration. Engaging planners and public health professionals throughout the process, the coalition is modeling cross-sector partnerships for undergraduate and graduate students at Rutgers University. By integrating a leadership development component into the coalition's work, the Trenton Healthy Communities Initiative is fostering change for Trenton residents now—and reducing the negative impact of sector siloes for future professionals.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

The Trenton Healthy Communities Initiative is developing more than a single master plan element. The coalition is developing a process that will be transferable to communities across the state. Engaging the APA and APHA members in the area, the Trenton team is working to share lessons learned, to provide training and outreach, and to share their experiences through the two professional associations involved in Plan4Health. Recognizing that not every member of APA and APHA will be directly involved in a Plan4Health initiative, the New Jersey team is leading the Plan4Health cohort in developing its library of best practices.

Plan4Health is made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the CDC or imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. Learn more about Plan4Health and the National Implementation and Dissemination for Chronic Disease Prevention project at www.cdc.gov/communityhealth.