

Plan4Health: Strategic Partnerships For a Healthy, Livable Community Nashua, NH

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. The goal of the Plan4Health Nashua coalition, which began in January 2015, is to advance street planning and design to support safe and accessible active transportation. This past spring, the Greater Nashua Public Health Advisory Council officially endorsed the Plan4Health Nashua program for inclusion in Nashua's 2015-2018 Community Health Improvement Plan.



CHALLENGE

Addressing obesity and related chronic diseases is a top priority for greater Nashua's public health partners. Nashua is New Hampshire's second largest city with 86,933 residents. Recent data has shown that two-thirds of the Nashua population is either over-weight or obese, and 17.4% of 3rd grade students are obese. 9.3% of residents are below the poverty level, and the unemployment rate is 6.2%. The trends are more pronounced in certain

areas of Nashua, including the five areas that the Plan4Health Nashua Complete Streets project is focusing on. These communities were found to have high Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) scores, indicating they are less bicycle-friendly. These five priority neighborhoods represent 50% of the Nashua population and include areas with the greatest social, economic, and environmental disparities according to U.S. Census Bureau data.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

Nashua welcomes all partners interested in supporting a healthy, livable community and encourages your input about Complete Streets! Not in Nashua? Consider reaching out to your local planning and public health departments to learn see what's happening in your community.

To learn more about Plan4Health Nashua and all coalitions participating in Plan4Health, check out www.plan4health.us and join the national conversation on social media by using and following [#plan4health](https://twitter.com/plan4health).

"Our focus is to maximize resources for physical activity for people that don't have access. Instead of planning and designing for cars, how do we plan and build our roads for whatever mode of transportation you use, regardless of economic status."

- Nicholas Coates

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SOLUTION

With the understanding that partnerships are critical to success, the coalition was founded by both planning and public health groups and continues to expand by including additional partners from the community. The Plan4Health Nashua program focuses on developing Complete Streets guidelines to make it more conducive – through street design – for people to be physically active. To this point, core activities include conducting street mapping and data analysis; auditing current regulations and ordinances; developing a Complete Streets training guide; and strategic communications to educate the community about Complete Streets.

RESULTS

When the Greater Nashua Public Health Advisory Council officially endorsed the Plan4Health Nashua program as a community initiative included in Nashua's 2015-2018 Community Health Improvement Plan, the coalition gained critical support from city leaders. Plan4Health Nashua has launched a communications campaign highlighting what has already been done in Nashua to improve choices for multi-modal transportation, the opportunities that still exist, and the health and economic benefits that can result from adopting a Complete Streets way-of-thinking. For over two months, the coalition tested the city streets using a method that considered Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) data for bicycle suitability. The coalition attended events and worked with community partners to gain input from residents to help make adjustments to the LTS data based on other factors that commonly affect a bicyclist's comfort level. A similar study will be conducted for walkability. Once completed, the data will be used to develop a Complete Streets guidebook to help inform future planning in Nashua. Complete Streets information and tools from Nashua are available online (healthnashua.org/plan4healthnashua).

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

Plan4Health Nashua will continue to build momentum around the importance of Complete Streets to public health and community livability. Residents and local leaders will be empowered to provide their unique insight and perspectives to help inform the project. The coalition is also thoughtfully engaging the planning department in an ordinance audit, coupled with the street analysis data, to provide guidelines and priorities for Complete Streets projects. The guidebook will provide a "how to" for Nashua and other communities in New Hampshire, as well as a model for planners and public health professionals to work together across the country.

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