

# Plan4Health Summit County Summit County, OH

## 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. Plan4Health Summit County (Ohio) believes higher levels of community health are possible through urban design. The coalition will incorporate Complete Streets policies into existing transportation plans; expand use of garden space in the community emphasizing making farm fresh produce available; and introduce client choice pantries to the existing pantry system.



## CHALLENGE

The burden of chronic disease in Summit County is significant, with disease prevalence rising well above the national average. In 2011, Summit County was ranked 48 and 36 out of 88 counties for morbidity and mortality, respectively. Summit County had an estimated poverty rate of nearly 16 percent, which increased to 29 percent for children between the ages of five and 17. Additionally, one third of Summit County's low-income population lives in a food desert area.

The target communities of the Buchtel neighborhood in West Akron, Barberton, Springfield/Lakemore, and Twinsburg Township all have high prevalence of at least one chronic disease risk factor. From an obesity rate of nearly 30 percent in Barberton to more than 60 percent of Springfield/Lakemore residents with high cholesterol, these communities need options to make the healthier choices easier choices.

## YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

Plan4Health Summit County encourages you to reach out and get involved in the coalition!

For non-residents, consider checking out a local farmers market or walking or biking to school. To learn more about this project and all coalitions participating in Plan4Health visit: [www.plan4health.us](http://www.plan4health.us).

Join the national conversation at the intersection of planning and public health on social media by using and following #plan4health.

*"As we have engaged with our four communities, we are encouraged by the enthusiasm and activity of local officials to increase access to healthy food and improve their right of ways to increase walking, biking and use of public transit."*

*- Jerry Egan  
Director of Akron Section  
APA Ohio*

## Contact

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## SOLUTION

Plan4Health Summit County is integrating a range of strategies to increase both access to physical activity opportunities and the availability of nutritious food and beverages in the four target areas. The coalition is working to engage community members and strengthen support for Complete Streets programming as well as Safe Routes to School initiatives, ensuring residents have the chance to safely walk and bike to work and school. The coalition is committed to improving access to nutritious food by supporting and expanding community gardens and strengthening the farm to community projects in the county. Connecting the various elements of the local food system is complemented by the coalition's efforts to expand client choice programs in area food pantries.

## RESULTS

The initial project period has been an opportunity for the coalition to strengthen partnerships and connect with residents. Plan4Health Summit County has conducted several community forums, gathering feedback and prioritizing community needs. The coalition has worked to raise awareness about the importance of a holistic approach to health, connecting with Akron's Better Blocks initiative to create a temporary pedestrian-only street experience. Complementing the efforts of Complete Streets initiatives, the opportunity to experience a completely safe and walkable street encouraged community members and piqued public interest.

## SUSTAINING SUCCESS

The upcoming school year will be a key time for the coalition to engage with the local school district and continue implementation of the Safe Routes to School program. The coalition will strengthen and expand community gardens, taking advantage of the winter months to develop the mentor components of the Master Gardener program and bridge the busy harvest seasons. Plan4Health Summit County is also committed to connecting with local APA and APHA members, providing training opportunities and sharing lessons learned within the Akron Section of APA and presenting at state level conferences.

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](http://www.cdc.gov/communityhealth).