

Plan4Health: Healthy Eating + Active Living Austin, TX

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. Healthy Eating + Active Living, launched by the City of Austin, seeks to increase physical activity and improve the local sustainable food system. Through collaborative efforts, the initiative is implementing a community-wide program to reduce solo car trips and to improve access to nutritious food through neighborhood systems planning in the North Central Austin area.



CHALLENGE

The Healthy Eating + Active Living project serves more than 21,000 residents in North Central Austin, 68 percent of which identify as Hispanic or Latino. The 2012 Austin/Travis County Community Health Assessment recognized the lack of access to healthy foods and safe environments for physical activity as key concerns. The physical inactivity rate for the Hispanic population in Austin/Travis County is 32 percent, Hispanic adults and children report

eating less fresh fruit and vegetable servings than any other population group, and the prevalence of obesity among Hispanic children in Austin Independent School District is 25 percent. Additionally, 87 percent of trips in this area are made by personal automobile. The combination of inactivity and inadequate access to healthy food leave North Central Austin residents at risk to be disproportionately burdened with chronic stress and increased instances of chronic disease.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

The Healthy Eating + Active Living project is committed to connecting with the community and wants to hear from you. Non-residents could consider connecting with nonprofit organizations in your area—and packing a healthy snack before walking, biking, or taking transit to work or school! To learn more about the project in North Central Austin and all coalitions participating in Plan4Health, check out the project website (www.plan4health.us). Join the national conversation at the intersection of planning and public health on social media by using and following #plan4health.

"The team is currently working on an in-depth outreach process to better collaborate with residents and organizations that live and work in the priority community to ensure that our definition of active living and fresh, healthy food access align with the community's vision."

- Ashley LeMaistre

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SOLUTION

The Healthy Eating + Active Living Coalition is dedicated to engaging residents and responding to the identified challenges. Ensuring the community is heard is essential to sparking meaningful change and better understanding chronic disease in the community. Inspired by Smart Trips in Portland and Chicago, the coalition will work to adapt the program to North Central Austin. Increasing the current 1 percent biking rate, 1.6 percent walking rate, and 7.2 percent transit use rate means changing the way people think and the investment priorities of the neighborhood and city. To help make healthier food options the easier choice, the coalition will work with the community to develop a food system toolkit that can help them get involved in creating a healthy, sustainable food system.

RESULTS

During the first few months of implementation, the Healthy Eating + Active Living Coalition has successfully engaged more than 86 local organizations. The comprehensive outreach strategy has been launched by the coalition leadership team and has engaged businesses, places of faith, schools, community centers, grocery stores, neighborhood associations—and more! Mapping the skills and expertise of coalition members against possible partners, the coalition has swiftly achieved buy-in for the project and generated positive buzz for the development of the Smart Trips program and a food systems toolkit. Building a foundation of shared leadership and a collective vision, the Healthy Eating + Active Living Coalition is not a coalition representing the community. The Healthy Eating + Active Living Coalition *is* the community.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

The Healthy Eating + Active Living Coalition will continue working with community members and partner organizations to develop and implement Smart Trips and to develop a food system toolkit. As the coalition identifies what works and what doesn't work, best practices and lessons learned will be shared with local stakeholders—as well as members of the APA and APHA professional communities. The work of the Plan4Health initiative aligns with the City of Austin's comprehensive plan, Imagine Austin, ensuring the project is integrated into future plans and lives beyond the funded period.

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.