

Plan4Health: Healthy Savannah Chatham County, GA

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 Savannah, a coalition of more than 100 members, is working to make Chatham County a healthier place to live. The coalition's goals include increasing access to nutritious food, creating distribution and retail implementation plans; and changing policies that are barriers to access to healthy food.



CHALLENGE

Major causes of morbidity and mortality in Chatham County, such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, are related to poor diet and physical inactivity. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in the county, accounting for 3,348 deaths and over 20,000 potential years of life lost before age 75 from 2009-2013. Obesity has reached epidemic proportions in Chatham County: 27 percent of adults are obese. According to County Health Rankings,

24.6 percent of African-American adults were obese, compared to 14.5 percent for whites, emphasizing the need to apply a lens of health equity to all project strategies. Additionally, 20 percent of the population reported that they did not have access to a reliable source of food during the past year.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

Healthy Savannah continues to grow! Attend an event, stop by the farmers' market or find out what's happening in your neighborhood.

If you're not in Chatham County, consider supporting your own farmers market—or having lunch at a locally sourced restaurant.

To learn more about Healthy Savannah and all coalitions participating in Plan4Health, check out: www.plan4health.us. Join the national conversation at the intersection of planning and public health on social media by using #plan4health.

"The Plan4Health grant has made a significant difference as it has allowed us to move more quickly to deepen our food system study and broaden our already strong coalition."

*- Paula Kreissler
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SOLUTION

Founded in 2007, Healthy Savannah is committed to improving the health of the community and dedicated to continuing work in Savannah, building on previous successes as well as ensuring the community is ready to tackle the challenges of today. By identifying the growth of the coalition as a key project strategy, Healthy Savannah is weaving sustainability throughout the project. In order to address rising obesity rates and to increase access to healthy, nutritious food, the coalition is expanding its food system needs assessment, targeting key institutions in the community for policy change—schools and the largest local hospital—and working to connect local producers to residents in at-risk neighborhoods.

RESULTS

Building on the first phase of the coalition's food assessment, Healthy Savannah has conducted comprehensive research of best practices, surveyed consumers and producers as well as conducted initial conversations with target institutions. Outreach has involved health fairs, community events, and key stakeholders—including the local planning commission and the local food policy council—to gather impressions and to listen to feedback. It's not just about the numbers for Healthy Savannah. The coalition wants to learn from the community. How do you find vegetables on your lunch break? Where do you go to grab a snack? The coalition wants to understand the story behind the statistics, to combine qualitative and quantitative data. Healthy Savannah's strong coalition structure allows the Plan4Health initiative to complement the coalition's ongoing work with the Forsyth Farmers' Market and the recently launched Farm Truck 912, a mobile food market. The priority communities for the Plan4Health project are again complemented by the coalition's childhood obesity initiative, both efforts targeting vulnerable Title I schools in Savannah.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

Healthy Savannah is expanding and deepening the coalition through various initiatives. The coalition has become an active advocate for policies promoting health including the Smoke Free Air Ordinance, the Public School System Wellness Policy, and a Complete Streets Ordinance, as well as programs such as Walking School Bus days, Health Fairs, and festivals. Healthy Savannah is committed to ongoing education of and engagement with decision-makers and employers to think about change from the policy, systems, and environmental perspective. Building on the momentum of the Plan4Health funding, the coalition will continue to share resources, ideas, and data with other nonprofits to strengthen the collective approach to community change.

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