

Plan4Health:B-Well Bensenville Bensenville, IL

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. B-Well Bensenville is addressing physical inactivity, with a focus on the needs of low-income and Hispanic residents—the city’s most vulnerable populations. Efforts include short-term solutions like raising awareness about new physical activity opportunities within the community and longer-term policy and environmental changes to improve physical activity rates among residents.



September 2015 B-Well Bensenville Walkathon and Family Fest.

CHALLENGE

The Village of Bensenville, a suburban community of 18,535 residents located in the northeast corner of DuPage County, Illinois, has a large percentage of residents at risk for negative health outcomes. As a whole, the community is not reaching the recommended levels of physical activity: only 22 percent of tenth graders reporting being active for 60 minutes a day; 19 percent of adults aged 20 or older self-report no

leisure time activity—like running or gardening or walking for exercise—during the month preceding the survey. And, hospital discharge rates for Type 2 diabetes indicate rates that are 15 percent higher for residents of Bensenville than the county as a whole.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

Residents of Bensenville can join the movement by biking and walking on the trails around the village—or use the coalition hashtag: #BWellBensenville! Having conversations in your community about ways improve bikability and walkability are key to building healthy, vibrant communities. To learn more about the B-Well Bensenville project 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 APA project has allowed coalition members the opportunity to learn about policy and environmental changes related to Complete Streets and Active Transportation. Once the project is complete, all of Bensenville's future planning decisions will include considerations for health--a huge success for the Village and its residents."

- Becky McFarland

Contact

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SOLUTION

B-Well Bensenville, a healthy living coalition created in 2014, is an example of the community's commitment to provide opportunities for all residents. It also means the Plan4Health project is not starting from scratch but is leveraging existing resources. The coalition will continue to collaborate with community members, connecting public health issues to planning and development efforts. Moving the community to action is an exciting challenge for the B-Well Coalition—and the initial project months have included intensive data gathering as well as the development of a communications plan. During the project period, the coalition will create an active transportation plan and a Complete Streets policy, ensuring that all residents will be able to safely bike and walk to school and work.

RESULTS

B-Well Bensenville's focus on policy change remains rooted in the needs and perspectives of residents. The coalition launched a community-wide survey as an initial step to determining specific policy recommendations and to prioritizing community change. The survey was developed by key coalition members and represented the strength of the collaboration between planners and public health professionals: the Village of Bensenville, DuPage County Health Department, and the Active Transportation Alliance. The survey assessed how residents currently get to grocery stores, libraries, work, and trails as well as how they would like to get to these destinations. The comprehensive outreach approach to data collection—including the survey in the local water bill, posting the survey on the village and library websites, engaging families in summer programs and in local soccer leagues—yielded a statistically significant return. And, the results demonstrated the coalition's commitment to reach more vulnerable groups by the exceptionally high response rate from Spanish-speaking community members!

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

The B-Well Bensenville coalition is working toward the full integration of planning and public health—and will move the community to action throughout the project period as the active transportation and Complete Streets policies are developed. Designing a bike-to-train guide will complement the policy changes, empowering residents to take advantage of the local trail system and the existing infrastructure today, as the community looks ahead to making all streets safe and accessible for tomorrow.

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