

Plan4Health: Partnerships Beyond Borders Kane County, 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. The Kane County Planning Cooperative seeks to expand and build partnerships to address inactivity and unhealthy diets by integrating health, transportation and land use planning efforts. Strategies include advancing leadership; conducting food feasibility studies; implementing the Fit Kids plan; and assisting local governments with walkability studies in at-risk neighborhoods.



CHALLENGE

Data from the 2011-2012 Kane County Community Health Assessment shows Kane County has high rates of overweight and obese residents, with an average obesity rate of nearly 30 percent across the county. One in five children in the county is overweight and in some communities it is an alarming one in three. Only 14 percent of adults report eating five servings of fruit and vegetables a day. Additionally, federally-qualified health centers

servicing low-income patient populations report health outcomes data that differ significantly from county-level outcomes data, reflecting underlying health disparities experienced by vulnerable populations in Kane County.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

If you are a resident of Kane County, look for the mobile farmers market in Aurora or connect with the Planning Cooperative online to view the 2015 Leaders' Summit.

If you are not in Illinois, consider purchasing fresh, locally sourced products in your own community!

To learn more about Kane County and all coalitions participating in Plan4Health, follow #plan4health or check out: www.plan4health.us.

"The demonstration booth is something that we can share throughout the city of Aurora and be able to reach the residents who may not otherwise have access to quality food."

*- Barbara Jeffers
Executive Director,
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SOLUTION

The Kane County Planning Cooperative was created as the central core of the 2040 Plan's implementation strategies and has the focus of planning for the 2040 Plan's overarching theme, Healthy People, Healthy Living and Healthy Communities. Mirroring the cooperative's integrated structure, the Plan4Health initiative combines strategies focused on physical activity as well as nutrition. Conducting walkability studies in target communities as well as supporting Fit for Kids projects will make active living opportunities accessible to residents throughout the county.

RESULTS

Building on the previous connections with local farmers, the Plan4Health initiative's food hub feasibility study will increase access to—and awareness of—fresh, locally available Kane County products. Identifying and vetting possible models and sites for the food hub with local farmers and interested buyers will ensure farmers' needs and priorities are included in the vision for the hub. During the initial months of the project, the Kane County Planning Cooperative held a Leaders' Summit, bringing together nearly 180 local decision-makers from a range of key sectors. The high level of participant engagement and the cross-sector atmosphere emphasized the leadership role the planning cooperative plays in bringing diverse perspectives to the table. Evaluations from the event were overwhelmingly positive. Another early success highlights this trend of innovative partnerships: the City of Aurora and the Fit Kids Funder's Consortium Healthy Food Demonstration Booth. The booth, supported through Plan4Health and the Fit for Kids initiative, will reach 80,000 residents and travel to Aurora's three farmers markets—all markets that accept SNAP benefits, making it easier for families to access healthy food.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

The food hub feasibility study and walkability audits provide key opportunities to connect with community members during the remainder of the project period. The steering committee for the food hub, including both growers and buyers, are looking forward to the opportunity to continue this initiative and connect residents to local products. Focusing on assessment, the coming months will combine research and local needs to define the next steps for county activities beyond the Plan4Health project period.

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