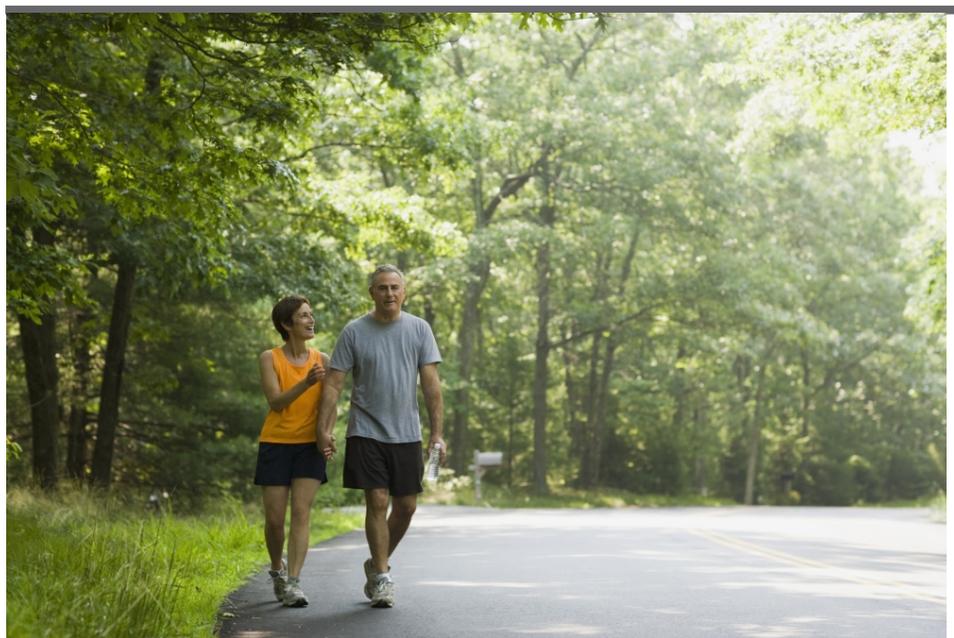


Plan4Health: Reach Healthy Communities Columbus, IN

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 City of Columbus (Indiana) Reach Healthy Communities initiative focuses on increasing daily physical activity. Strategies include bridging gaps between policy adoption and implementation; collaborating with the city planning department to design and implement bicycle and pedestrian plans; and promoting community design that encourages healthy, active living.



CHALLENGE

The most recent community health needs assessment in Columbus was conducted in 2015 and identified key risk factors that are linked with chronic disease. Nearly 40 percent of the population has been diagnosed with high blood pressure and just under 84 percent have one or more cardiovascular risk factors. The needs assessment also indicated that only 49 percent of the population gets its recommended amount of daily physical activity. And, concerns are

even greater for children in the area: over 24 percent of parents reported that their children have three or more hours of daily screen time; the number one health challenge for school children is asthma, followed by diabetes. Reach Healthy Communities is an established coalition dedicated to engaging residents and partners in building healthy, vibrant places through three key strategies: access to health care for all; promoting healthy lifestyles; and promoting healthy relationships.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

The Reach Healthy Communities coalition wants to hear from you! To learn more about the coalition and the work being done visit www.whatsyourreach.org.

To learn more about this project and all coalitions participating in Plan4Health, check out the project website (www.plan4health.us) and join the national conversation at the intersection of planning and public health on social media by using and following [#plan4health](https://twitter.com/plan4health).

"By working with students and schools, I've seen the benefits of incorporating physical activity on the way to and from school. We are committed to measuring the impact of the changes that are made and have a community goal to increase the number of students who walk or ride a bike to school. We are proud to be a part of the opportunity to increase the health of a student."

- Kelli Thompson, RN
Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation Safe Routes to School Coordinator

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SOLUTION

In response to the needs assessment indicators and the ongoing challenges residents face reaching their daily physical activity recommendations, the coalition is focusing on three key strategies to improve pedestrian access. The first strategy will analyze three intersections on the Columbus People Trail System connecting residents to three popular community parks. In partnership with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), the coalition will write a case study with the intention of developing a list of INDOT endorsed intersection design options for state highways. Through a community-wide education campaign, the coalition is committed to communicating the need for designing and building the community in a way that promotes daily physical activity.

RESULTS

Leveraging its established relationships and key partnerships, Reach Healthy Communities has hit the ground running. Launching early news about the Plan4Health project during Bike Month with a full calendar of activities, the coalition garnered early media coverage and momentum. Integrating the Plan4Health advisory council with established working groups, Reach Healthy Communities was able to connect with passionate and dedicated residents, while looking ahead to ensure the sustainability of project plans. Plan4Health is a time-limited opportunity; the Active Transportation Outreach Team and the Bike and Pedestrian Infrastructure Team will continue to strengthen Columbus beyond any particular grant. Early results from observations of and interviews at key intersections indicate that now is the time to strengthen crossings—not just making it easier to get to the other side of street, but safer, too. Watching high school track students take shortcuts to bypass the crosswalk raises concerns: *Is this intersection efficiently designed?* Waiting for two and a half minutes for the light to change would make anyone restless and leaves walkers wondering *Is this intersection for me or just for vehicles?*

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

Reach Healthy Communities will continue its research and analysis of key intersections throughout Columbus to spark discussion and generate ideas with its partners—and with residents. The launch of the Go Healthy Columbus media campaign will keep physical activity in the spotlight, with the goal to make every month as active as bike month and WALKtober. And, of course, the development of an INDOT approved list of design options is meant to be a resource for communities across the state as they tackle their own challenging intersections and make streets safer for pedestrian and bicyclists.

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.