

Plan4Health: A Healthier Master Plan for Trenton, NJ

"The Plan4Health planning initiative has revealed another tool that planners can leverage to advance our mission, 'to protect the health, safety, and welfare' as part of the community engagement process. Being able to present a clear message that resonates in the minds of everyday people and decision makers is critical toward developing sensible solutions. Public health goals possess the ability to chip away special interests and policies that hinder our ability to make great communities happen."

*Charles Latini, Jr., AICP, PP
President, American Planning Association
New Jersey Chapter*

The coalition presented during the New Jersey American Planning Association annual conference in January 2016, providing a "how to" for planners and public health professionals to begin incorporating health into plans across New Jersey.

Success Stories



SUMMARY

Plan4Health connects communities across the country, funding work at the intersection of planning and public health. Anchored by the American Planning Association (APA) and the American Public Health Association (APHA), Plan4Health supports creative partnerships to build sustainable, cross-sector coalitions. Through collaboration, the Trenton Healthy Communities Initiative seeks to address built environment impediments to physical activity and healthy diet. Strategies included promoting a health focus in local decision making and advancing the creation of a health and food systems master plan as well as increasing health literacy among residents.

CHALLENGE

Trenton, New Jersey faces a range of challenges related to physical activity and nutrition. The Community Needs Assessment completed by the Trenton Health Team in 2013 found significant health challenges and disparities facing residents. Nearly 50 percent of Trenton children are overweight or obese, with more than one in four children considered obese in every age category. Lack of exercise is compounded by a high prevalence of sedentary activity among Trenton's youth.

For instance, 34 percent of children ages three to 18 spend more than two hours a day on weekdays. Trenton is also a food desert, with only three supermarkets located in the city. Food insecurity affects one in five Trenton households, with 17 percent of Trenton households regularly lacking enough food to eat. Approximately 22 percent of kids ages three to 18 eat less than one full serving of vegetables daily and 40 percent do not eat enough fruit.

<http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/>

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SOLUTION

The Trenton Healthy Communities Initiative developed a Health and Food System Element (HFSE) as one component of the city's new Master Plan. Throughout the drafting the HFSE, the coalition engaged in a comprehensive process to review existing literature and to identify possible models for the work in Trenton. The coalition also partnered closely with the City of Trenton, Rutgers University, the Trenton City Department of Health and Human Services, the Trenton Health Team, and various non-profit and community-based organizations. Through the development of the HFSE, the coalition expanded the conversation around health and successfully applied a health in all policies decision-making lens to the work.

SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

The work in Trenton, NJ is an example for other communities of how to change environments to make healthy living easier where people live, learn, work, and play.

Reach out to Jeffrey Wilkerson, Planning Director, City of Trenton Division of Planning at 609-989-3502 or jwilkerson@trentonnj.org to learn more about the master plan and how you can share your thoughts and ideas. Consider contacting your local planning agency to see what is happening in your community.

For more information about Trenton, NJ and all of the coalitions participating in Plan4Health, check out the Plan4Health project website (www.plan4health.us) and join the conversation on social media with [#plan4health](https://twitter.com/plan4health).

RESULTS

The Health and Food System Element is composed of seven sections outlining the goals for the plan. Each section has health pathway descriptions, milestones, strategies, rationales, action descriptions, implementation responsibility, funding responsibility and process, and examples of successful implementation. Also included are health indicator maps, which guide site-specific recommendations to be implemented into district plans. The model is designed to be used across the state and there is positive energy for scaling and spreading this work.

The comprehensive approach of the coalition resulted in strong partnerships, providing the building blocks for ongoing cross-sector work between the planning and public health professions.

Plan4Health is made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The views expressed in this success story 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 of Chronic Disease Prevention project at www.cdc.gov/communityhealth.

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