

Plan4Health: Complete Streets in Nashua, NH

"I am very excited to see that this project has kicked off! I have had Rivier University public health and nursing students do a walkable community assessment as a part of an immersion experience for a course that I have taught for years and they have continually identified non-walkable and non-biking areas on our walks! The Complete Streets Project is amazing work in the City of Nashua that is evidence of improvements made to make our streets safer for all!"

*Bobbie D. Bagley
City of Nashua Director of Public Health and Community Services
Adjunct Instructor at Rivier University
Nursing and Public Health Programs*

In November 2015, New Hampshire Public Radio spoke with Terry Johnson, the director of Healthy Eating Active Living NH, about how efforts like Plan4Health are combating obesity.



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. The goal of the Plan4Health Nashua coalition, which began in January 2015, is to advance street planning and design to support safe and accessible active transportation. During the spring of 2015, the Greater Nashua Public Health Advisory Council officially endorsed the Plan4Health Nashua program for inclusion in Nashua's 2015-2018 Community Health Improvement Plan.

CHALLENGE

Addressing obesity and related chronic diseases is a top priority for greater Nashua's public health partners. Nashua is New Hampshire's second largest city with 86,933 residents. Recent data has shown that two-thirds of the Nashua adult population is either over-weight or obese, 17.4% of 3rd grade students are obese, 9.3% of residents are below the poverty level, and the unemployment rate is 6.2%. The trends are more pronounced in certain areas of Nashua, including the

five areas that the Plan4Health Nashua Complete Streets project is focusing on. These communities were found to have high Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) and Level of Walkability (LoW) scores, indicating they are less bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly. These five priority neighborhoods represent 50% of the Nashua population and include areas with the greatest social, economic, and environmental disparities according to U.S. Census Bureau data.

Contact

Sarah Marchant

City of Nashua
229 Main Street
Nashua, NH 03060
603-589-3095 phone

SOLUTION

The Plan4Health Nashua coalition's efforts focus on leveraging street design to make the city more conducive for people to be physically active. The three main project objectives are auditing current regulations and ordinances, conducting LTS and LoW analyses, and developing a Complete Streets Guide. These core strategies are accompanied by strategic communications to engage and educate the community. The communications campaign focuses on recognizing previous work done by the city that improved choices for multi-modal transportation, highlighting opportunities for additional improvements, and explaining the health and economic benefits that can result from adopting a Complete Streets policy.

SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

Nashua's Complete Streets efforts are focused on informing city officials, staff, and the community about the benefits of Complete Streets and outlining practical ways all bicyclists and pedestrians can be considered during the planning process. Through outreach to the Greater Nashua Public Health Advisory Council, the Plan4Health Nashua program was officially endorsed and included in Nashua's 2015-2018 Community Health Improvement Plan, allowing the program to continue well after the study, audit, and Complete Streets Guide have been completed. Furthermore, the coalition's work is being used as an example for other communities that are working to change environments to make healthy living easier where people live, learn, work, and play.

Join Nashua in supporting a healthy, livable community and consider reaching out to your local planning and public health departments to learn about what's happening in your community. For more information about all of the coalitions participating in Plan4Health, check out www.plan4health.us and join the conversation on social media with #plan4health.

RESULTS

LTS and LoW analyses combine quantitative data and qualitative feedback from the community to assess both biking and walking conditions. Plan4Health Nashua collected data on all of the roads in the city in order to quantify bikability and walkability, map potential origins and destinations, and identify stressful or broken connections. The LTS and LoW helped inform the Complete Streets Guide, which has been presented to Nashua's Planning Board and the Planning and Economic Development Committee. A Complete Streets information and training seminar, including an introduction by the Mayor, was held for city staff, community leaders, and elected officials in late March of 2016.

The Complete Streets Guide provides a "how to" for Nashua, other communities in New Hampshire, and planners and public health professionals across the country looking to adopt a Complete Streets approach. For example, a partnership led by the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC) is developing a Complete Streets Toolkit for Manchester, the state's largest city, and surrounding communities. The Plan4Health Nashua guidebook will serve as a model for the work in Manchester. Members of the Plan4Health Nashua coalition are also working on a statewide Complete Streets policy that has passed the State Senate and will be considered by the House.

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.

Success Stories

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