

# Plan4Health: A Healthier Savannah

"Plan4Health has provided a consistent strategy for the development of policy, advocacy, and education that promotes healthy behaviors. All aspects of food system will improve as the efforts of the Plan4Health partners continue."

*Dr. Randy McCall*  
Director  
Chatham County Department of Health

*Through the coalition's efforts, a mobile farmers' market policy was passed in February 2016, allowing markets to operate with longer hours and in more locations across the community.*



## 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. Healthy Savannah, a coalition of more than 100 members, is working to make Chatham County a healthier place to live. The coalition's goals include increasing access to nutritious food, creating distribution and retail implementation plans, and changing policies that are barriers to access to healthy food.

## CHALLENGE

Major causes of morbidity and mortality in Chatham County, such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, are related to poor diet and physical inactivity. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in the county, accounting for 3,348 deaths and over 20,000 potential years of life lost before age 75 from 2009-2013. Obesity has reached epidemic proportions in Chatham County: 27 percent of adults

are obese. According to County Health Rankings, 24.6 percent of African-American adults were obese, compared to 14.5 percent for whites, emphasizing the need to apply a lens of health equity to all project strategies. Additionally, 20 percent of the population reported that they did not have access to a reliable source of food during the past year.

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## SOLUTION

Healthy Savannah was founded in 2007 and now has over 100 members. The Plan4Health project allowed the coalition to build on previous successes to improve the health of the community. The coalition focused on addressing rising obesity rates and increasing access to healthy, nutritious food by expanding its food system needs assessment, targeting key institutions in the community for policy change, and working to connect local producers to residents in at-risk neighborhoods. The coalition combined qualitative and quantitative data gathered through the food needs assessment as well as surveys of consumers and producers and outreach to community members.

## SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

Healthy Savannah is committed to ongoing education of and engagement with decision-makers and employers to think about change from the policy, systems, and environmental perspective. The work in Chatham County is an example for other communities of how to change environments to make healthy living easier where people live, learn, work, and play.

Healthy Savannah continues to grow – attend an event, stop by the farmers' market or find out what's happening in your neighborhood. For more information about Chatham County and all of the coalitions participating in Plan4Health, check out the [www.plan4health.us](http://www.plan4health.us) and join the conversation on social media with #plan4health.

## RESULTS

Healthy Savannah's comprehensive approach and commitment to building a social movement has resulted in many successful initiatives. The coalition partnered with Gulfstream, a local employer and philanthropic leader, to launch the community's first mobile market. This effort brings fresh produce to target communities across the city. The coalition also partnered with two local hospitals to explore opportunities to improve policies, systems, and environments by offering healthier options in the cafeterias. The coalition is working with partners to grow demand for local food via the mobile market and institutional food service, in addition to increasing supply by providing farmer support services such as business and horticulture training. In the future, the community may consider the development of a food hub.

Healthy Savannah has become an active voice for policies promoting a holistic approach to health, with previous successes including the Smoke Free Air Ordinance, the Public School System Wellness Policy, and a Complete Streets Ordinance, as well as programs such as Walking School Bus days, Health Fairs, and festivals.

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](http://www.cdc.gov/communityhealth).