

Plan4Health: Go Healthy, Columbus

"The Walking Audit was a valuable and educational experience for our 3rd grade students. They explored the current resources in place, making Parkside Elementary School such a walkable area, and discussed future options to improve the area. Students quickly became experts by presenting the information to their classrooms and answering questions from curious classmates. When asked if they enjoyed the walk audit, student responses portrayed the importance of the work that has been done and yet to come. One stated, 'It is a good thing we have bike and walking trails! It saves energy, environmental resources, and keeps us healthy and active through exercise!'"

Casey Voelz
Assistant Principal
Parkside and Taylorsville
Elementary Schools

Over 1,400 children across seven schools participated in a walk and bike to school event as part of WALKtober 2015. Third Grade students from Parkside Elementary School also participated in a walking audit with the Walkable and Livable Communities (WALC) Institute. They learned about elements in the street environment that encourage or discourage safe walking and biking.



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 Healthy Communities Initiative in Columbus, Indiana focuses on increasing daily physical activity. Strategies include bridging policy adoption and implementation; collaborating with city planning to design and implement bicycle and pedestrian plans; and promoting community design that encourages healthy, active living.

CHALLENGE

The 2015 community health needs assessment in Columbus 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 assessment also indicated that only 49 percent of the population gets the recommended amount of daily physical activity.

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. 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.

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SOLUTION

The Plan4Health coalition in Columbus focused on three strategies: the analysis and subsequent re-design of key intersections on the Columbus People Trail System connecting residents to popular community parks, a case study in partnership with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) to develop a list of INDOT-endorsed intersection design options for state highways, and a community-wide education and public awareness campaign named Go Healthy, Columbus (www.gohealthycolumbus.org).

SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

The Columbus coalition's efforts to develop community-led construction drafts of key intersections are making streets safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. This work is an example for other communities of how to change environments to make healthy living easier where people live, learn, work, and play.

The Healthy Communities coalition wants to hear from you! To learn more about the coalition visit www.whatsyourreach.org and www.gohealthycolumbus.org. 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](https://twitter.com/plan4health).

RESULTS

Healthy Communities is pursuing efforts to make the Columbus community more conducive to daily physical activity by leveraging the relationships and tools developed through their Plan4Health work. The coalition is prioritizing short-term, mid-range, and long-term recommendations to improve bike and pedestrian friendliness developed by the WALC Institute as part of their Active Living Workshop. The community will launch a bike share program with seven stations and 72 bikes during bike month in May 2016, and the INDOT-approved list of design options will become an important resource for communities across the state as they tackle their own challenging intersections.

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/>