

Plan4Health: Baltimore Greenway Trails Coalition

Baltimore, MD

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 Baltimore Greenway Trails Coalition seeks to address health equity and safety in transportation infrastructure through building an urban trail network that connects existing trails to disconnected neighborhoods, parks, anchor institutions, and to the downtown core.

Challenge

Baltimore, MD is a community that is lacking active transportation infrastructure, with a fragmented built environment. Opportunities for physical activity, resident mobility, and connectivity are inhibited by a combination of factors, including deindustrialization, auto-centric planning and single-use codes. Resident mobility and connectivity is further hindered by a lack of public transportation options and over 30 percent of residents not having access to a car. Nearly 30 percent of residents also reported no physical activity. These low rates of physical activity are accompanied by high rates of chronic disease, including obesity (31 percent), Type 2 diabetes (12.4 percent), and heart disease (26 percent). Additionally, the unemployment rate is 13.9 percent, more than double the rate for Maryland as a whole. The ability to reach a place of employment was identified by residents as the biggest barrier to staying employed.

Solution

The Baltimore Greenway Trails Coalition will address issues in the built environment and create a more robust trail network to increase and sustain connectivity and opportunities for physical activity. The coalition will work with new and established partners to identify opportunities and barriers through a walkability and bikability audit, create and implement demonstration projects to showcase active living opportunities, and ensure that active living is incorporated into neighborhood plans. This project will help to inform and establish best practices and will be shared with other regional trail networks.



Your Involvement is Key

Residents of Baltimore can learn more about the coalition and ways to get involved by visiting the coalition's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/BaltimoreGreenwayTrailsCoalition). This page includes information on upcoming events and planning activities as well as information from advocates and partners.

To learn more about the Baltimore Greenway Trails Coalition and all coalitions participating in Plan4Health, check out the project website (www.plan4health.us).

Join the national conversation at the intersection of planning and public health on social media by using and following #Plan4Health.

Results

The coalition hosted a successful kickoff meeting convening over 50 stakeholders and decision makers. National and local leaders discussed urban trails as a vital part of community revitalization and public health equity. Participants included elected officials, public agency and non-profit leaders, business leaders and community advocates. This early success laid the groundwork work for subsequent coalition meetings to solidify a unified vision. The coalition has also begun outreach to communities beyond the “usual suspects” of trail planning. As the coalition strengthens capacity, charrettes are being planned to facilitate trail planning through community walks and meetings. To complement this grassroots approach, the coalition is working with partners across all sectors to complete asset mapping to align related work and to break down barriers that have prohibited collaboration in the past.

Contact

Jim Brown

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
2121 Ward Court NW, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20037
202-974-5109 phone

"This project is particularly exciting in that it brings people together who care about the health and vitality of all of Baltimore's neighborhoods. We are convening the doers into a collaborative problem solving process through a new lens – equitable access to physical activity for recreation and transportation."

- Jim Brown, Coalition Leadership Team Member, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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.