

Plan4Health: Healthy Corner Stores in Kenton County, KY

"Most of our customers don't drive, so they are dependent on our store for food. Customers have started purchasing more healthy options for their dinners since we started stocking fresh fruits and vegetables in our new open-air fridge. Our most popular products are fresh whole vegetables and cut up fruit."

*Biniam W. Michael
Manager of Bob's Food Market
Covington, Kentucky*



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 Kenton County Plan4Health Coalition (KCP4H) is working to provide access to nutritious food across the county. Efforts include an assessment of underserved neighborhoods in addition to a series of actions addressing access to healthy food.

CHALLENGE

Kenton County, Kentucky is just south of the City of Cincinnati, at the confluence of the Ohio and Licking Rivers. Covington is the largest city in Kenton County representing nearly 30 percent of the county with a population of 40,640. Of the 22,331 individuals in the county with incomes below the federal poverty line, 48 percent live in Covington. According to the 2013 Greater Cincinnati Community Health Status Survey, only 45 percent of Covington residents report having

excellent or very good health status. Only 17 percent of residents in Kenton County and Covington meet the daily nutritional requirement of fruits and vegetables – and people with limited access to healthy food spend significantly more time traveling to a grocery store than the national average of 15 minutes. The six areas of the county identified as underserved are located within the urban areas of the county, including portions of Covington.

The coalition held a Food Policy Council Summit in March 2016, a key strategy for sustaining county-wide plans to strengthen the local food system. Attendees included a combination of officials and leaders as well as local farmers and community residents.

Success Stories

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

SOLUTION

The Kenton County Plan4Health coalition is working to strengthen connections between rural food producers and urban markets, focusing on key corner store retailers to increase healthy food options in underserved neighborhoods. The coalition developed a phased application process that incorporates the concerns of owners, making sure not imposing change from the outside, but rather partnering with residents to make their communities healthier. The project also included an assessment of local retail outlets in Covington and identified store locations through a comprehensive data analysis. The coalition started a “healthy bucks” program, supporting healthier after-school snacks. During National Nutrition Month in March, the coalition hosted four after school events at different corner stores, partnering with stores to give away mystery snack bags.

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SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

The work in Kenton County, KY 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 your local food policy council or planning department to find out more about what’s happening in your area. For more information about Kenton County, KY and all of the coalitions participating in Plan4Health, check out the www.plan4health.us and join the conversation on social media with [#plan4health](https://twitter.com/plan4health).

RESULTS

The corner store program to improve access to nutritious foods was successful in part because of the coalition’s efforts to work directly with store owners and operators to increase inventory options and drive customers to these options. The coalition conducted surveys to solicit community impact and feedback, including opinions on perception, shopping experience, and product request. The first survey garnered over 100 responses and allowed the corner stores to improve produce selection and increase community appeal. The effort also illustrated the benefit of planners and public health professionals working together. Public health experts drove survey development and connected with key demographics, while planners leveraged their GIS skills to create meaningful maps.

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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