

Plan4Health: Pathways to Health

by: Joani Dotson

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. Pathways to Health will create greater access to locally grown foods, reduce barriers to physical activity, and promote a health in all policies approach to changes in communities across Tulsa County.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

Tulsa residents can stay up-to-date on coalition news and events by visiting the coalition's website (www.pathwaystohealthtulsa.org) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/TulsaP2H) and following @TulsaP2H on Twitter. To learn more about Pathways to Health and all partners 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.

CHALLENGE

Tulsa County, OK is the most densely populated county in the state, with a population of more than 600,000.

Oklahoma chronic disease rates are concerning: rates of obesity (27.8 percent), diabetes (13.6 percent) and hypertension (36.3 percent) are all worse than the national average.

Oklahoma also ranked poorly among states for fruit and vegetable consumption; only 16.5 percent of adults in Tulsa County consumed adequate amounts of fruits and

vegetables. The number of grocery stores is much less than the national average and the number of fast food restaurants much greater. In Tulsa County, 17 percent of adults and 23 percent of children are food insecure. Additionally, Tulsa County ranked poorly with a walkability rating of 45.8, which is a contributing factor to why nearly one-third of adults do not participate in any physical activities.

"We have taken a step in the right direction to make the healthy choice an easier choice."

- Amber England, of Oklahoma Fit Kids Coalition following legislation limiting liability of Oklahoma schools made available for physical activity.

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SOLUTION

Pathways to Health works with community partners to reduce barriers to physical activity and nutrition by focusing resources on areas of need and strengthening cross-sector partnerships. Baseline data will be collected and assets mapped to identify opportunities to expand shared use agreements and to establish a “Food Forest” to increase the availability and consumption of healthy foods. Toolkits will be created for assessing the impact of the built environment on public health and the coalition will hold “Walk-Shops” as a community education and health assessment tool.

RESULTS

Approximately 224,942 people in Tulsa do not have half mile access to a park with sufficient amenities. Between 70-80% of school outdoor recreation areas are currently unlocked and available for shared use to alleviate limited park access but most do not actively communicate this resource to their community. Despite many parks and unlocked school playgrounds, 5,614 people do not have half mile access to either a park or unlocked school outdoor recreation area in one school district boundary alone. The Places to Play Map illustrates available school amenities and is a great marketing method for communicating use of school outdoor grounds for physical activity. City of Tulsa parks department granted permission to implement food forestry in neighborhoods consuming less than one serving of fruits and vegetables daily.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS