

Greater Helena Area Active Living Wayfinding System

Plan4Health: Healthy Communities Coalition

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 Healthy Communities Coalition seeks to develop an Active Living Wayfinding System, especially for parks and along urban trails in the greater Helena, Montana area, to increase participation in physical activity and improve access to nutritious food programs.



CHALLENGE

In Lewis and Clark County, MT, approximately 80 percent of residents live in the greater Helena area. In recent years, this area has seen a five percent growth, which is larger than both the state and the U.S. Nearly 13 percent of residents live in poverty, however, and 26 percent have disabilities. In 2011, 60 percent of adults in Helena reported being overweight or obese; 28 percent of high schoolers and 25 percent of middle schoolers reported being

overweight as well. Data revealed that only 4.3 percent and 1.6 percent of workers in greater Helena walk or bike to work, respectively. If the infrastructure for biking were available, upwards of 60 percent of workers indicated they would bike to work.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

To learn more about the Healthy Communities 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](https://twitter.com/plan4health).

"I love our Coalition meetings because there is so much trust that we can all disagree and listen to one another's viewpoints and come out with a result that is so much better than we started with! It's energizing."

- Karen Lane, Healthy Communities Coalition of Greater Helena

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SOLUTION

The Healthy Communities Coalition will increase health equity by guiding people to physical activity opportunities and increasing access to nutritious food. The coalition will implement an Active Living Wayfinding System and comprehensive communications plan for the greater Helena area to help align the recently revised Greater Helena Area Transportation Plan, the City of Helena Growth Policy, the Lewis and Clark County Growth Policy, and the Downtown Helena Master Plan. Focus groups will be conducted throughout the project to ensure that resident needs are being heard.

RESULTS

Funds were awarded to the Coalition by the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors with the purpose of increasing inclusivity of people with disabilities. The Reaching People with Disabilities Through Healthy Communities grant allowed the Coalition to conduct twelve organizational assessments and one macro-level, community-wide assessment using the Community Health Inclusiveness Index (CHII). The results were summarized and used to identify strategies recommended in the Obesity Prevention Guidelines, Recommendations, Adaptations Including Disability (GRAIDS) tool developed by the CDC. The findings from the assessments will be incorporated into the Wayfinding System and Communication Plan. Coalition organizational members from Montana Independent Living Project and the Montana Disability and Health Program provided valuable guidance and expertise in this process.

Plan4Health project consultants and Coalition members conducted specific focus groups with seniors, parents with young children receiving SNAP benefits, people with low vision and teens with disabilities. Close to 900 persons from the general public completed the on-line wikimapping process where they marked their usual destinations and routes.

During the focus group process a teen stated, "I love Helena because community organizations really listen to us and make accessibility improvements."

An integral part of the project is communicating with key partners and especially with the decision makers in the three jurisdictions within the Greater Helena Area. One Coalition member, referencing the recent luncheon planned with that specific purpose in mind, said, "I was impressed by the turnout at the community stakeholder luncheon that the health department held in connection with our Plan4Health grant. There were over two dozen people there -- everyone from county commissioners, to school superintendents, to Disability Ambassadors, just to name a few! It was an impressive showing of how supportive and committed our community is to making access to physical activity and good nutrition available to every resident."