

Plan4Health: Healthy Communities Coalition of Eagle County

by: Katie Haas

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 of Eagle County, Colorado will examine the impact of healthy eating and active living (HEAL) policies on a county-wide scale. In addition, the coalition will explore successes and challenges with municipal community engagement in planning efforts and provide resources to support future engagement to assure more diverse community participation.

CHALLENGE

The Eagle River Valley of Eagle County is a rural resort community with a population of approximately 48,000; one-third of the residents are Hispanic. Nearly 55 percent of households are affected by chronic disease, with Hispanic residents disproportionately affected. Recent Eagle County data shows that Hispanic residents have a prevalence of diabetes nearly three times that of Caucasian residents and an overweight and obesity rate of more

than 60 percent. Transportation, infrastructure and safety factors contribute to existing health disparities and limit opportunities for physical activity. Municipalities have identified challenges connecting with the Hispanic community for planning efforts. Assuring an authentic community voice from diverse populations is critical to truly meet the needs of the community and to work toward health equity.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

To learn more about the Health 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).

This grant award enables our Eagle County planning jurisdictions to take a step back and assess how community planning and design impacts the health of our workforce, which is a crucial differentiator in maintaining a competitive local economy.

Jeremy Rietmann, Vail Valley Partnership and Healthy Communities Coalition member

SOLUTION

The Healthy Communities Coalition will conduct a policy scan of local comprehensive plans to increase understanding of existing healthy eating and active living policies and inform future recommendations to support healthy community design. The coalition will support messaging that prioritizes healthy eating and active living throughout the Eagle River Valley, and will seek opportunities for collaboration on healthy living initiatives in the built environment. Additionally, the coalition will leverage existing relationships to encourage engagement and participation in community planning processes by developing resources to support community engagement efforts.

RESULTS

Thanks to Plan4Health, the Healthy Communities Coalition convened Planners from all seven Eagle River Valley municipalities to connect about healthy community design. This is meaningful because thinking about health in the context of planning had not previously been addressed in a cohesive way across the community. Each municipality demonstrated their commitment by signing an intergovernmental agreement for participation in Plan4Health and participated in a collective visioning session about healthy community design and the potential impact for the whole community. This effort has enabled the Coalition to develop strong relationships with the municipalities which will last beyond the term of this project, enabling the Coalition and public health to become more involved with healthy community planning efforts across the Valley.

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