

Plan4Health: Delaware Coalition for Healthy Eating and Active Living

by: David Edgell

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 Delaware Coalition for Healthy Eating and Active Living seeks to incorporate health and equity in future comprehensive plan updates.



SUCCESSFUL MOMENT

The conceptual bicycle network has been included in the update of the MPO's cycle plan for the county.

CHALLENGE

Kent County, the smallest county in Delaware, has a population of 172,000, which has increased 36 percent since the year 2000. Within Kent County, the City of Dover is diverse with 42 percent and nearly 7 percent of the population identifying as African American or Hispanic, respectively. Nearly 13 percent of Kent County residents are living below the Federal Poverty Line and the educational attainment level and rates of age-adjusted death from

chronic disease and adult inactivity are worse when compared to the rest of Delaware. The obesity rate in Delaware has doubled since 1990 and children in Kent County are the most overweight in Delaware. Additionally, Kent County contains multiple food deserts and has the fewest miles of off-road trails in Delaware.

"This opportunity was the catalyst needed to not only understand the impact of health in policy and planning, but to adjust our approach by integrating health in planning, especially in comprehensive planning."

*- Mary Ellen Gray
Kent County Planner*

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SOLUTION

The Delaware Coalition for Healthy Eating and Active Living integrated health and planning efforts with community engagement. The coalition will conduct health and equity assessments, including feedback received from an adapted phone survey, and other data sources to draft land use planning, design, and policy recommendations. In preparation for the update process for the Kent County and City of Dover Comprehensive Plans, the coalition will conduct charrettes and develop a guidance document that details design strategies for locations that aim to improve health and equity.

RESULTS

The Delaware Plan4Health team determined which communities had a greater need for equitable strategies to improve healthy foods access and physical activity. The team created and adapted tools to provide an objective measure of need for equity, food access, active transportation and active transportation. A community survey identified perception and behaviors related to healthy eating and active living, including limited safe, accessible parks, transit, and healthy, fresh food. When combined with the planning tools and charrettes, the team identified priority areas and potential solutions both within the city and the surrounding county. From this work team developed guidance documents with planning recommendations for the comprehensive plan updates. Also, the team prepared toolkits for produce carts and shared-use opportunities.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

The Delaware Plan4Health Team was recently awarded the Planners4Health grant, which will bring together stakeholders with shared interests, assets and resources to leverage for a coordinated, strategic approach in sustaining efforts. This includes pursuing funding opportunities and implementing projects as partners and collaborators.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

To learn more about Plan4Health check out the project website (www.plan4health.us) and join the national conversation by using and following #plan4health. For Delaware Plan4Health, check out www.deplan4health.org.

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 for Chronic Disease Prevention project at www.cdc.gov/communityhealth.