

# Plan4Health: Centralina Health Solutions Coalition

by: Michelle Nance

## 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 Centralina Health Solutions Coalition (CHSC) is working to decrease health disparities by addressing barriers and increasing opportunities for physical activity in at-risk neighborhoods in Charlotte, North Carolina.



## CHALLENGE

The Mecklenburg County Public Health Priority Area (PHPA) consists of more than 60,000 people in over 50 neighborhoods considered at risk for poor health outcomes. Comprised mostly of African American (74 percent) and Hispanic residents (14 percent), the medium income, employment rates, and educational attainment rates within the PHPA are much lower compared to the county as a whole. The crime rates and the number of residents receiving food

and nutrition services are also much higher when compared to the county average. Countywide, African Americans are more likely to report being overweight or obese, participating in no physical activity and having less access to healthcare. Although the dense land use pattern found within these neighborhoods could facilitate walking to community resources and destinations, deficient infrastructure, design issues, and safety are major concerns.

## YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

To learn more about Plan4Health check out the project website ([www.plan4health.us](http://www.plan4health.us)) and join the national conversation by using and following #plan4health.

## SUCCESSFUL MOMENT

In September 2016, the coalition's Planning for Healthy Communities Conference trained 100 planning, recreation, and health professionals.

*"Having the expertise of the planning community around the health implications of where people live and how they get certain places has been fantastic. There are more voices to advocate to local officials and do community outreach and engagement."*

- Erin Bayer Smith  
Senior Health Manager  
Office of Policy and Prevention  
Mecklenburg County Public Health

## Contact

### Michelle Nance

Centralina Council of Governments  
525 North Tryon Street, 12th Floor  
Charlotte, NC 28202  
704-348-2709 phone

## SOLUTION

The Centralina Health Solutions Coalition is working with community members to address their needs and to overcome infrastructure, policy, and systems gaps to participating in physical activity. The coalition is: applying a health lens to neighborhood planning initiatives focused on increasing physical activity opportunities; conducting walking, biking, and park access audits; and identifying both existing and potential opportunities for shared use agreements. The coalition plans to develop materials, including a toolkit and case studies, to facilitate replication in other areas.

## RESULTS

We have developed four tools to help examine and promote opportunities for physical activity including a walkability audit, a park access audit, street light inventory, and shared use inventory. Each of these tools have been used in Charlotte to analyze the conditions of neighborhoods, record baseline conditions, and recommend improvements to coalition members and neighborhood leaders. These findings and recommendations will be incorporated into future land use and transportation plans in the near future, improving the quality of life within these neighborhoods. The most valuable results include strengthened relationships among coalition members and neighborhood leaders, improved communication between partnering agencies, and a greater understanding of the impact the built environment has on public health.

## SUSTAINING SUCCESS

We will sustain success through replication and education. Activities include: involvement in the Planners4Health Initiative which will allow us to share lessons learned in Charlotte throughout North Carolina, an article being printed within the Carolina Planning Journal on the importance of community engagement, presentations at national conferences for planning and public health, and a publically available series of webinars and tools on meaningful community engagement, walkability audits, park access audits, and shared use. The Centralina Health Solutions Coalition and Research Center will also continue to host the annual Planning for Healthy Communities Conference and expand the work started in Mecklenburg County throughout the Centralina region.

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](http://www.cdc.gov/communityhealth).