

Plan4Health: Centralina Health Solutions 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 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 the Centralina Health Solutions Coalition and all coalitions participating in Plan4Health, check out the coalition's page of 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.

"If residents could take just one less car trip per day, we'd have 500,000 fewer cars on the road, we'd save \$4,200 annually in fuel costs, and would have 83 more hours a year to spend with friends and family."

Scot Curry, Charlotte DOT

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

Perhaps the most important aspect of the project is the opportunity to empower residents and community leaders so that they not only have a grasp of the physical and perceptual barriers to physical activity, but also understand the process by which policy and infrastructure improvements are made, and can effectively advocate for community improvements. Rickey Hall, President of the Reid Park Neighborhood Association, demonstrated this leadership when speaking to over 100 planners, park and recreation and public health officials at the September 2016 Planning for Healthy Communities Conference. His message about the importance of working “in” community resonated with participants and provided a clear description of why healthy community work is important and must come from “within” the neighborhood to be sustainable.

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