ACTIVE
LIVING

Cover image: People traveling to work in Columbus, Indiana, on Bike to Work Day 2015

PLAN4Health

An American Planning Association Project

What is Plan4Health?

Plan4Health is a national movement connecting communities across the country to link planning and public health. Plan4Health is anchored by American Planning Association Chapters and American Public Health Association Affiliates with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Launched in September 2014, Plan-4Health supports creative partnerships to build sustainable, cross-sector coalitions in 35 communities. Coalitions work with communities to increase access to healthy food or increase opportunities for active living where residents live, learn, work, and play.

At the national level, the American Planning Association and the American Public Health Association partner with the American Heart Association, the National WIC Association, the Society for Public Health Education, and the Directors of Health Promotion and Education. These organizations pursue a shared CDC platform to prevent chronic disease, help Americans live healthier lives, and support communities to make healthy living easier where people live, learn, work, and play.

Plan4Health reconnects planning and public health, fields that grew out of the same movement to create healthy communities. By reinvigorating the links between public health and the built environment, Plan4Health combats chronic disease by increasing access to nutritious foods and increasing opportunities for physical activity. Plan4Health aims to improve health outcomes through improvements to the built environment by building collaboration, community capacity, and civic engagement. The project will potentially impact more than three million people across the country through policy, systems, and environmental change strategies.

What is Active Living?

Active living is all about incorporating physical activity and movement into everyday activities. For example, taking the stairs instead of the elevator or biking to work are part of an active lifestyle. Increasing daily physical activity can prevent obesity and promote health for people of all ages.

What does Active Living mean in the context of Plan4Health?

Plan4Health coalitions approach active living by considering how the built environment supports or hinders active living. Do neighborhoods have sidewalks, bike lanes, and calm traffic? Are there trees, parks, and trails that are safe and accessible for everyone? Plan4Health coalitions have worked in many different ways to improve the policies, governing systems, and environments impact these aspects of active living in their efforts to make healthy communities where people live, learn, work and play.

How Can This Toolkit Be Used?

This toolkit offers a snapshot of reports, webinars, toolkits, community examples, videos, podcasts, and more about active living in Plan4Health. It can be read cover to cover or looked at in pieces, as each page can be a stand-alone document to inform and educate about active living strategies. Additional information about the Plan4Health coalitions, including mini-webinars, videos, and podcasts, is available on the Plan4Health Peer Learning Network.

Best Practices → Communications → Coalition Building → Data Collection
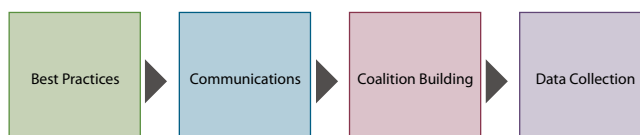
A group of third grade students in Columbus, Indiana, conduct a walk audit on their campus as part of Walk to School Day.

Active Commuting

Best practices

Bike-friendly businesses: Business and workplace policies and amenities that support biking—including incentives such as free bike share memberships and bike parking, showers, and locker rooms—promote active transportation by addressing common barriers to commuting by bike.

■ In Columbus, Ohio, the Plan4Health coalition created a Bike Friendly Business program to encourage business to be more bike-friendly. The program also educated businesses about how biking can help their bottom line by fostering happier and more productive employees, lowering health care and transportation costs, and strengthening employee recruitment and retainment rates.

Smart Trips: Reframing the way people make travel decisions can have a big impact on active commuting. Smart trips is a framework for encouraging people to reduce the number of solo driving instances and increase walking, biking, carpooling, and riding public transportation.

■ In Austin, Texas, the Plan4Health coalition used this framework to develop Smart Trips Austin and an accompanying toolkit that was used to educate community members. The toolkit was used in household outreach, property visits, and at community events, resulting in a 44 percent decrease in driving trips and a 15 percent increase in active trips (public transportation, walking, bicycling).

From our partners

Transportation and Health Toolkit

Bicycling and Walking in the United States 2016: Benchmarking Report

Safe Routes to School by the Numbers: Using Data to Foster Walking and Biking to School

From the field

Alex Smith from Columbus Public Health discusses active living strategies.

A complete street in Nashua, New Hampshire.

Complete Streets

Best practices

Intersection redesign: Complete streets are designed for people of all ages and abilities using multiple modes of transportation, including walking, biking, driving, and public transportation. Creating complete streets requires policy changes which in turn enable the community to redesign existing streets into complete, connected streets.

■ In Columbus, Indiana, the Plan4Health coalition collaborated with the state department of transportation and other partners to develop the City of Columbus Intersection Study, a compilation of intersection design options and educate the community about complete streets. The coalition also held a walk and bike to school event that involved over 1,400 children.

Level of Traffic Stress analysis: One method for assessing the state of street completeness is using an algorithm to measure the Level of Traffic Stress. Such analysis looks at the availability of routes between people's origins and destinations that do not require travel that exceeds their tolerance for traffic stress and are direct.

■ In Nashua, New Hampshire, the Plan4Health coalition found that such algorithms existed only for analysis of bicycling networks. The coalition developed a Level of Traffic Stress algorithm and a complete streets policy audit to analyze the safety of walking in a given area.

From our partners

Complete Streets Toolkit

Complete Streets: Active Transportation, Safety, and Mobility for Individuals of All Ages and Abilities

Complete Streets with Smart Growth America

From the field

Meet the Bensons, a Wisconsin family that walks and bikes to school.

The Klopfenstein Amphitheater for the Performing Arts in Linn County's Lowe Park.

Natural Design

Best practices

Greenways: Trail systems and greenways are connected networks of trails in multiple jurisdictions that can increase the number of people using trails for transportation and recreation. Greenways involve building out from specific locales of parks and trails to make a more connected network across a region.

- In Columbus, Ohio, the Plan4Health coalition developed a strategic plan for the Central Ohio Greenways. The plan includes recommendations to improve access to trails and provide trail-based programming for all Columbus residents. The Ohio Greenways project is focused on building trails and ensuring connectivity between trails and from neighborhoods to trails.

Biophilic Design: The concept behind biophilic design is integrating interactions with nature into buildings and communities. It can be applied at regional, community, and neighborhood levels, and to streets and buildings.

- In Linn County, Iowa, the Plan4Health coalition paired biophilic design with other active living principles to focus their work to build a healthy community. The coalition created a guidebook, Step into Nature with Marion, with six key ideas: preserve a connected network of "green" spaces, promote interactive neighborhoods, ensure that active living is a just a step away, prioritize people-powered movement, develop a community culture of active living, and collaborate with other sectors to be more active.

From our partners

- Healthy Community Design Toolkit
- Parks, Trails and Health Workbook
- Landscape Performance for Healthy Communities

From the field

Listen to Scott Ulrich discuss the chronic disease prevention work in Columbus, Ohio.

Setting up a pop-up traffic calming demonstration in St. Louis (left). One of the St. Louis neighborhoods using tactical urbanism to create temporary street infrastructure improvements (right).

Innovation in Active Living: Traffic Calming in St. Louis

What?

The St. Louis Plan4Health coalition pioneered active living by addressing the high-speed traffic and car-centric neighborhoods across the city. Making permanent street-design changes to the community was not a possibility without policy change—but instead of allowing this to be a barrier, the coalition reimagined street design through temporary pop-up traffic calming demonstrations. They focused on four neighborhoods to highlight the possibilities of creating a better pedestrian experience and make the streets of St. Louis safer and more accessible for residents in the most vulnerable neighborhoods.

How?

The coalition reimagined street design through pop-up traffic calming demonstrations across different neighborhoods. Instead of a space dominated by vehicles, the pop-up demonstrations created spaces that accommodate walkers, bicyclists, and vehicles in colorful and inspiring displays. They followed a tactical urbanism approach, changing the built environment in a fluid and meaningful way with creative approaches to uplifting and recycling existing resources. With spare tires painted bright, cheerful colors, and reusable plastic flower pots, the coalition used simple materials to create brand new spaces.

The coalition developed a lending library of materials and instructions on how to implement the demonstrations. The toolkit is easy to share with neighborhoods across the city, and ensures that pop-up demonstrations can continue in the future.

The coalition engaged local residents and decision makers to ensure that everyone could experience the possibilities of policy change. Community members were involved and experienced firsthand the changes that could result from redesigned streets. The coalition worked with the community to educate residents on the benefits of traffic calming to create safer streets.

From the field

St. Louis Plan4Health Traffic Calming Demonstrations video

[Slow Your Street: A How-To Guide for Pop-Up Traffic Calming](#)

SmartTrips Austin's Bilingual Pedestrian Safety Brochure.

Communications

Tips from the field

- In an effort to engage all community members, the Bensenville, Illinois, Plan4Health coalition developed all communications in both English and Spanish. This includes a "Bike to Metra" brochure to help residents begin commuting by bicycle to the commuter rail system.

- The Nashua, New Hampshire, Plan4Health coalition worked with New Hampshire Public Radio to showcase the work under way through an interview with the coalition director.

Engaging the community

B-Well Bensenville: Active Transportation and Complete Streets videos

From our partners

CDC Gateway to Health Communication and Social Marketing Audience Profiles

Making Memorable Messages – Plan4Health Communications Webinar

Media 101: Interviews – Plan4Health Communications Webinar

Connect Columbus (Ohio) discussing street design options at the 2015 Open Streets Columbus event.

Coalition Building

Tips from the field

■ The Linn County, Iowa, Plan4Health coalition convened a joint board meeting between the Iowa Public Health Association and the Iowa Chapter of the American Planning Association. Through discussions during the meeting, the boards were able to see the extent of connection between the two groups, thus building stronger coalition ties.

■ In Austin, Texas, the Plan4Health coalition designed a comprehensive outreach strategy that engaged over 100 local community-based organizations. Through this broad group, the coalition was able to develop champions to help in the implementation of these programs and initiate policy change.

Engaging the community

Interview with Laura Garrett, Healthy Communities, Columbus, Iindiana

From our partners

Developing Effective Coalitions: An Eight Step Guide

Collaboration Assessment Tool

Community Partnerships Part I: Innovative Partnerships to Improve Health

The Level of Traffic Stress street map displaying the walkability of streets in Nashua, New Hampshire.

Data Collection

Tips from the field

■ The Nashua, New Hampshire, Plan4Health coalition used both qualitative and quantitative data to assess biking and walking conditions. This included data on all of the roads in the city to quantify bikeability and walkability, map potential origins and destinations, and identify stressful or broken connections. The coalition developed a complete streets guide with this data.

■ In Columbus, Indiana, the Plan4Health coalition held public input events around designing bicycle and pedestrian crossing treatments at several intersections along a critical east-west bicycle/pedestrian route in the community. The open house events displayed five stations where residents were asked to provide input on potential routes and crossing treatments at specific intersections.

Engaging with the Planning and Community Health Center

The Benefits of Street-Scale Features for Walking and Biking

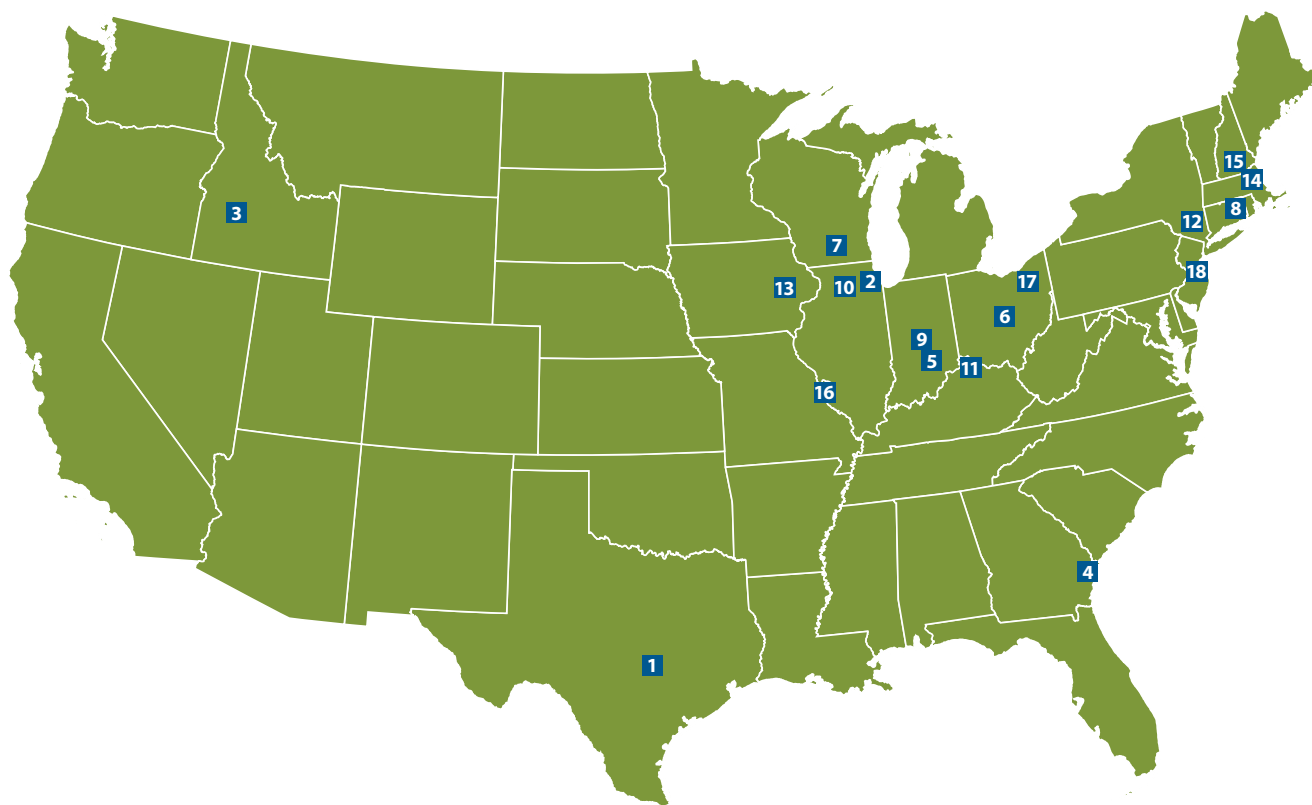### From our partners

Active Living Research – Tools and Resources

US Department of Transportation – Transportation and Health Tool

Community Commons

The **PLAN4HEALTH** community *envisions* the full integration of **PLANNING** and **PUBLIC HEALTH** where we *live*, *learn*, *work*, and *play*.

Plan4Health Cohort I Coalitions

1 Austin, TX	10 Kane County, IL
2 Bensenville, IL	11 Kenton County, KY
3 Boise, ID	12 Kingston, NY
4 Chatham County, GA	13 Linn County, IA
5 Columbus, IN	14 Metro Boston, MA
6 Columbus, OH	15 Nashua, NH
7 Dane County, WI	16 St. Louis
8 Eastern CT	17 Summit County, OH
9 Indianapolis	18 Trenton, NJ

Plan4Health Cohort I Coalitions

1 *Austin, Texas*: Austin's Plan4Health Pilot program, launched by the city, sought to increase physical activity and improve the local sustainable food system. Through collaborative efforts, the initiative implemented a community-wide program to encourage the use of active transportation (bike, walk, transit) and to increase access to healthy eating through neighborhood engagement and outreach.

2 *Bensenville, Illinois*: The B-Well Bensenville Project has worked to address physical inactivity, with a focus on the needs of low-income and Hispanic residents—the city's most vulnerable populations. Efforts have included short-term solutions like raising awareness about new physical activity opportunities within the community and longer-term policy and environmental changes to increase physical activity levels in the community.

3 *Boise, Idaho*: Boise's Idaho Plan4Health Coalition is committed to improving Vista neighborhood residents' access to healthy food options as well as revitalizing the community. The Idaho Plan4Health Coalition used a mix of data collection approaches to build a truer picture of the neighborhood than might typically be possible. The results of this neighborhood food assessment incorporated data from key informant interviews, a neighborhood survey, demographic analysis, and observations from on the ground within the neighborhood. Using data and resident feedback, a strategic action plan was created to promote healthy lifestyles through healthy eating.

4 *Chatham County, Georgia*: Healthy Savannah, Inc., a coalition of 100 members, has been working to make Chatham County a healthier place to live. The coalition's goals include increasing access to nutritious food, creating distribution and retail implementation plans, and changing policies that are barriers to access to healthy food and active transportation.

5 *Columbus, Indiana*: Columbus is building upon existing health efforts and partnerships. The coalition work is led by Healthy Communities and the City of Columbus-Bartholomew County Planning Department. The initiative has focused on increasing daily physical activity by bridging the gap between policy adoption and implementation as it relates to the built environment. The built environment includes the physical communities where we live and work (e.g., homes, buildings, streets, open spaces, and infrastructure) and has a direct influence on a person's level of physical activity.

6 *Columbus, Ohio*: Increasing opportunities for physical activity in Columbus is the goal of the Columbus Public Health's Chronic Disease Prevention Advisory Board. Throughout this project and beyond, strategies to increase and promote physical activity were implemented. They include increasing the number of elementary and middle schools implementing Safe Routes to School Travel Plan recommendations, increasing the number of employers in Columbus who encourage active commuting, incorporating a health impact assessment into the Connect Columbus multimodal transportation plan, and developing a strategic plan for Central Ohio Greenways that includes recommendations to improve trail access and provide trail based programming for residents.

7 *Dane County, Wisconsin*: The Dane County Capital Region Healthy Communities initiative aims to increase physical activity and access to nutritious food. The coalition has worked to incorporate health into planning to eliminate food deserts and help neighborhoods become more walking and biking friendly. The Active Living Index was developed and helped to measure and map walkability and access to biking and walking at the census block group level. The coalition applied the tool to three target communities in the area to gain a better understanding of their needs and to empower decision makers, planning and public health professionals, and residents. Additionally, the coalition has been working to increase the capacity of local communities in South Madison to provide healthy food to designated food deserts.

8 *Eastern Highlands, Connecticut*: Small and rural planning and zoning commissions often have limited capacity. In response, the Eastern Highlands Health District Community Health Action Response Team coalition developed a toolkit aimed at assisting planning and zoning commissions with understanding how planning can impact long-term public health. This toolkit is designed to support the Eastern Highlands Health District region towns, as well as any other small, rural towns, in their efforts to enhance the quality of life in their communities through the prevention of illness, promotion of wellness, and protection of the human environment.

9 *Indianapolis*: Health by Design, a coalition dedicated to promoting spaces that encourage healthy living, developed and started to implement a strategy aimed at making Indianapolis in Marion County, Indiana, safer and more accessible for pedestrians. To do this, the coalition launched *WalkWays: Moving Indy Forward,* an initiative to make Indianapolis more walkable and to get more people walking. The coalition wants Indianapolis to be safer, more accessible, and inviting for people to walk or roll, for those who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices, so that every resident and visitor can be safe and comfortable in the public rights-of-way. WalkWays created a comprehensive pedestrian program for Marion County and developed a pedestrian master plan that will help promote community walkability and walking.

10 *Kane County, Illinois*: The Kane County Planning Cooperative was created as the central core of the 2040 Plan's implementation strategy and to focus on the Plan's overarching theme, Healthy People, Healthy Living, and Healthy Communities. Through Plan4Health, the cooperative expanded and built partnerships beyond geographic borders to address inactivity and unhealthy diets by integrating health, transportation, and land-use planning efforts. Strategies include advancing leadership, conducting food feasibility studies, implementing the Fit Kids plan, and assisting local governments with walkability studies in specific at-risk neighborhoods.

11 *Kenton County, Kentucky*: The Kenton County Plan-4Health Coalition is working to provide access to nutritious food across the county. The Kenton County PLAN4Health Coalition is currently pursuing four initiatives: (1) a county-wide assessment of food deserts—underserved neighborhoods with little or no access to healthy food due to mobility, availability, affordability, or a combination of the three; (2) a healthy corner store program aimed at providing healthier food options with urban corner stores; (3) a countywide outreach campaign to educate members of the public about healthy food options; and (4) forming a food policy working group in Kenton County to pursue future work related to food access.

12 *Kingston, New York*: [Live Well Kingston] is a city-endorsed coalition of organizations, businesses, and individuals that work together to improve the environment, culture, and opportunities for residents to lead healthier lives. The coalition aims to encourage active living in and out of the workplace through expansion of complete streets policies, trails, and other recreation building capacities. Simultaneously, the coalition seeks to improve access to healthy food through the city's newly adopted Eat Well Kingston program.

13 *Linn County, Iowa*: Planning Healthy Iowa Communities, led by the Active Living Coalition and the Food Systems Council will address inactivity and unhealthy diets, especially among low-income Linn County residents. Two objectives will include encouraging physical activity to combat sedentary lifestyles and incorporating food with high nutritional content at food pantries.

14 *Metro Boston*: The Inner Core Community Health Coalition in Massachusetts integrates seven existing municipal coalitions to address unhealthy diets within Boston's Inner Core region by increasing access to healthy food. These existing coalitions are part of a statewide movement to create healthier communities and include members of [Mass in Motion] and [Shape Up Somerville]. These groups focus on creating healthier communities through healthy eating and active living initiatives. Through Plan4Health, the coalition has focused on improving healthy retail by establishing a membership business association for convenience stores known as the [Greater Boston Association of Corner Stores].

15 *Nashua, New Hampshire*: The Plan4Health Nashua project is bringing the city to the forefront as a leader in New Hampshire in advancing complete streets at the municipal level. The coalition developed an informational video to help demonstrate that people's ability to make healthy choices is improved when health is integrated into comprehensive planning processes. The goal of the Plan4Health Nashua project is to advance street planning and design that support safer and easier ways to get around for pedestrians and bicyclists. The project is supported by the Greater Nashua Public Health Advisory Council, and was selected as a priority project for implementation in Nashua's 2015 *Community Health Improvement Plan*. Plan4Health Nashua is a collaboration between planning and public health professionals, including the Nashua Regional Planning Commission, the City of Nashua, New Hampshire Public Health Association, and Healthy Eating Active Living.

16 *St. Louis*: The [Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) partnership](#) aims to reduce obesity in St. Louis by five percent by 2018. This project presents a vision for safe access to physical activity for pedestrians throughout the city. Engaging the community through pop-up demonstrations, the partnership is addressing walkability and highlighting ways to build better streets with traffic-calming solutions. As part of the Plan4Health St. Louis project, the HEAL partnership is working with local experts to create a variety of tools that can be used in temporary demonstrations for traffic calming. These tools will be used for [pop-up demonstrations](#) in the focus areas of the Ville and Greater Ville, JeffVanderLou, Dutchtown, and Carondelet. The pop-up demonstrations offer possible solutions and provide fun and safe social spaces to St. Louis residents while also encouraging healthy, active living. Visit [Plan4Health: Trailnet](#) to learn more.

17 *Summit County, Ohio*: Summit County believes higher levels of community health are possible through urban design. To achieve this, Plan4Health Summit County will incorporate complete streets policies into existing transportation plans, expand use of garden space throughout the community by placing an emphasis on bringing farm fresh produce to the community, and introduce client choice pantries to the existing pantry system.

18 *Trenton, New Jersey*: The key objective of the Trenton Healthy Communities Initiative was to create a Health and Food Systems Master Plan Element to improve environmental conditions in the city, increase opportunities for city residents to engage in physical activity, and improve residents' access to healthy and affordable food choices.