

Reducing Health Disparities and Disease Burden

Kane County Planning Cooperative



STRATEGY: **POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

Goal:

Educate policymakers, planning and development staff, and the public about Kane County's 2040 Master Plan and provide resources and technical assistance to municipalities and other public and civic organizations to adopt and begin implementation of one or more of the plan's six high-priority policies.

Population Impacted:

515,000 county residents.

In 2012, the **American Public Health Association (APHA)** provided six awards to strengthen health departments' capacity to reduce health inequities through policy development, implementation, and/or evaluation. The following describes the efforts of one of the awardees.

BACKGROUND

A significant body of evidence has accumulated pointing to the impact of land use and transportation planning on population health. In 2010, the Kane County Board adopted a conceptual land use strategy resolution that recognized these connections and identified the unique opportunity presented by the state of Illinois' requirements mandating health, land use, and transportation plan updates. With its strategy resolution, the Kane County Board became the only county government in Illinois to provide legislative policy direction to its executive leadership to formally integrate health, land use, and transportation into a comprehensive master plan update in 2012 — [Kane County 2040 Plan](#). The plan includes six high-priority policy recommendations that aim to decrease chronic disease burden and reduce health disparities in Kane County:

1. Develop municipal bike-ability and walk-ability plans
2. Establish/expand community gardens
3. Expand smoke-free campuses
4. Expand Safe Routes to School plans to all nine school districts
5. Achieve USDA Healthier U.S. School Challenge standards in all nine school districts
6. Institute comprehensive, evidence-based workplace wellness policies

PROCESS

In order to accelerate implementation of the 2040 Master Plan and, in particular, these six high-priority recommendations, the Kane County Development Department, in collaboration with the Kane County Health Department and the Kane County Division of Transportation, convened the Kane County Planning Cooperative in April 2012. The purpose of the cooperative was to educate planning and development staff, members of

the public, and decision makers about the 2040 Master Plan and to provide resources and technical assistance to municipalities and other public and civic organizations that are implementing one or more of the plan's high-priority health, land use, and transportation policy recommendations. The cooperative includes county planners from the development, health, and transportation departments as well as partners such as municipalities, hospitals and schools. Kane County hopes that the cooperative will serve as a model for collaborative public policy planning and implementation by local health departments, land use agencies and transportation planners.

In summer 2012, the cooperative launched the "Creating Healthier Communities" project to support initiatives that proposed implementing one or more of the 2040 Master Plan's six high-priority policy recommendations. In developing the project and the request for proposals, the cooperative considered the issues and concerns of its members and of county residents. In August 2012, five awards were made to four organizations (two municipalities and two community organizations). The awards ranged from \$1,000 to \$5,000, and all recipients were required to provide a partial match of 50 cents per dollar awarded in either in-kind or cash contributions. Projects were completed in December 2012, and each organization submitted a final report detailing accomplishments and lessons learned. Information about each awardee is available on the [Kane County Planning Cooperative](#) web page.

OUTCOMES

The Kane County actively disseminated information about the Cooperative and Creating Healthier Communities in several venues.

- *Presentations to key decision makers.* Four meetings/workshops were held featuring presentations from experts on stalled developments, information and input on a county wide Green Infrastructure Plan and the latest workshop on Pathways to Healthier Communities. Attendees included mayors, municipal planning and economic development staff, and representatives from the business community. Two presentations were made to planning commissioners and public officials to keep them abreast of the progression of the cooperative. In addition, staff from the collaborating county departments made a joint presentation to the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's Land Use Committee.
- *Newsletter.* A monthly electronic newsletter was launched to provide regular updates on the cooperative's activities to more than 1,000 county contacts representing government, nonprofit organizations, and private developers.
- *Integrated planning meetings.* Staff from the development, health, and transportation departments met with leaders and staff of 16 municipalities to discuss Kane County's planning initiatives and the importance of continued long-range planning. The particular emphasis of these meetings was the 2040 Master Plan and efforts to integrate health, transportation, and land use.
- *Presentations to other jurisdictions.* Staff from the development, health, and transportation departments have made presentations regarding integrated planning and the Planning Cooperative at national, state and local forums.

Another aspect of Kane County's project was working with program evaluation experts from Northern Illinois University to develop a plan for evaluating the launch of the cooperative and the effectiveness of the project in attaining its goals and objectives. After the plan was finalized in June 2012, Northern Illinois University carried out the evaluation, which included semi structured interviews, content analyses, and direct observations. The findings, which have been compiled in a [white paper](#), highlight important themes related to project implementation, describe the project's successes and failures, and suggest causes for the successes and failures. Among the findings of the evaluation were that the ties created among the Kane County Health Department, the Division of Transportation, and the Department of Development & Community Services during the planning process facilitated collaboration in establishing the cooperative and carrying out the key activities of the project.



NEXT STEPS

Eighteen months of experience with the Cooperative has underscored the importance of continuous recruitment and engagement of local partners, boards and coalitions to both promote integrated planning and help them see the connections between their efforts and the vision of having the healthiest residents in Illinois. The Cooperative will also develop a more detailed framework that describes its role in relationship to existing and future efforts.

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