



Photograph from Boys and Girls Club member, 2012 Youth Photovoice Project

KEY PRIORITY

HEALTHY EATING AND ACTIVE LIVING (HEAL)

What is the problem?

While access and opportunity for improved nutrition and physical activity is important for everyone in Cuyahoga County, there is an unfair burden of poor health among our low-income, under-resourced communities, specifically communities of color, youth, and older adults.

In Cuyahoga County:

- » One in four adults is obese.
- » Residents named obesity as a top five health issue on the HIP-Cuyahoga Quality of Life survey (<http://ccbh.info/hipcuyahoga/?tag=quality-of-life-survey>).
- » Residents lack access to transportation, safe places for physical activity, and places to purchase fresh meats and produce.
- » Only 25% of adults reported meeting the recommended fruit and vegetable consumption.
- » About 50% all Cleveland residents live in a “food desert” area compared to 25% for Cuyahoga County as a whole.

Environments that support a healthy diet and physical activity are not spread equally throughout Cuyahoga County due to patterns of sprawl and population shifts. Over the past few decades, many people have moved away from the city and inner-ring suburbs, known as the urban core. As more people have moved away from these places, many of the businesses and services once available to support healthy eating and acting living moved as well. Those residents who remain in the urban core often find themselves living without grocery stores, green spaces, and other places to exercise safely.

KEY TERMS

FOOD DESERTS: Urban neighborhoods and rural towns without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food. Instead of supermarkets and grocery stores, these communities may have no food access or access only to fast food restaurants and convenience stores that offer few healthy, affordable food options.

GREEN SPACE: An area of grass, trees, or other vegetation set apart for recreational or aesthetic purposes in an otherwise urban environment.

NUTRITION: The intake of food, considered in relation to the body’s dietary needs.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: Any body movement that works muscles and requires more energy than resting. Physical activity generally refers to movement that enhances health.

SOCIOECONOMIC: Relating to, or concerned with, the interaction of social and economic factors.

URBAN OR SUBURBAN SPRAWL: The expansion of human populations away from central urban areas into areas with less population density; car-dependent communities.

Crime and different neighborhood characteristics impact people’s perceptions of safety and, as a result, impact their use of spaces for physical activity. Although these issues are most prevalent in Cuyahoga County’s urban core, it is not limited to that area. Areas in the county that range across the socioeconomic spectrum share similar concerns on issues including lack of sidewalks, bike lanes, parks, and healthy food retail options.

Residents want to improve their health and, given opportunities to do so, will make healthier choices. Although many people have a desire to make healthier choices, their environment and availability of resources often limits them. Improved nutrition and physical activity in schools, worksites, neighborhoods, and institutions can help address the limited access to healthy, affordable foods and safe places to be active. A focus on nutrition and physical activity policies and systems has the potential to shape opportunities and impact the health and well-being of all residents in Cuyahoga County.

What are the solutions?

Through policy implementation, evidence-based strategies, and community engagement, HIP-Cuyahoga partners will work together to create equitable access to healthy food and safe and engaging places for recreation and physical activity for everyone who lives, works, learns, and plays in Cuyahoga County. The Healthy Eating Active Living subcommittee has identified three evidence-based strategies to support this vision: healthy food retail, complete streets, and shared use agreements. These three strategies will help create the environments that make the healthy choice the easy choice for everyone in Cuyahoga County.



» **Healthy retail goals**—In neighborhoods without full-service grocery stores, corner stores provide a vital resource to the community. Subcommittee members will work with residents to identify local corner stores that could serve as a reliable source of healthy produce and food within their neighborhoods. A Healthy Corner Store Certification initiative will encourage and support stores to offer healthy items in a sustainable way. Recruited store owners will need to meet the requirements for certification through an in-depth evaluation of current corner store offerings, resident food preferences, and training on the new initiative.



» **Complete streets goals**—Communities need streets that provide safe places to walk, run, and ride bikes, and allow access to public transportation. Complete streets are places that allow for the safe travel of all people, whether on foot or bikes or in cars or buses.

- Subcommittee members will work to ensure that communities with complete streets policies remain committed to developing roadways that are safe for bicycle and pedestrian traffic.
- Subcommittee members also will develop a plan for a countywide network of protected bikeways and obtain funding for at least 10 miles of protected bike boulevards in this network outside of the City of Cleveland.



» **Shared use agreement goals**—Facilities in communities such as schools and businesses have resources that often sit empty and could be used for physical activity. Shared use agreements create the opportunity for these public and private places to increase community members’ access to facilities and opportunities for physical activity.

- Subcommittee members will increase the number of facilities with formal shared use agreements in order to increase resident access to facilities and opportunities for physical activity.

AN EXAMPLE

HIP-Cuyahoga is deeply committed to collaboration.

But what does that look like in practice?

A good example of people coming together for a common goal is the Healthy Eating and Active Living subcommittee, which has worked hard to help HIP-Cuyahoga collaborate with other initiatives in the county such as the Cuyahoga County Board of Health’s Creating Healthy Communities and the Cleveland Department of Public Health’s Healthy Cleveland initiatives. These initiatives and their diverse organizational partners are all working together to increase opportunities for residents to be physically active.

“We are now able to be more coordinated across a broader geography than we were able to before,” says Dr. Erika Trapl, PhD, a subcommittee anchor.

In addition to coming up with creative ways to leverage resources, the collaboration also has saved time by streamlining meetings and data collection in more effective ways. These changes in data collection will facilitate efforts to open up schools after hours to give whole neighborhoods more places to play and exercise.

“With a shared vision and a deepened collaboration, we can now leverage resources and have a bigger impact. We can use one group’s resources like training opportunities to serve all,” says Dr. Trapl.

And although this level of integration is new, it is likely to shape how people working to improve health in Cuyahoga County interact in the future. “One of the reasons it is really important is that if we didn’t work together, we’d be stepping on each other’s toes,” says Dr. Trapl. “If we weren’t in step, we’d be sending too many messages to our community. But, by coming together, we can send one stronger message in a more consistent way.”

Why does it Matter?

Everyone in Cuyahoga County deserves equitable access to fresh food resources and safe places to be active. Where people live should not dictate their ability to eat healthy or to be physically active. Consuming healthy foods and increasing physical activity are essential for good health. A focus on nutrition and physical activity has the potential to impact all residents in Cuyahoga County, especially those who currently face barriers to being healthy.

Summary of Goals and Intended Outcomes:

HEALTHY RETAIL

SHORT-TERM (1-2 YEARS)

- » We will survey corner stores in Cuyahoga County about current healthy food offerings, and survey residents about their food preferences, with attention to cultural differences. We will emphasize neighborhoods and communities with a strong link between food desert status and poverty.
- » We will use this information to develop and refine healthy corner store policies, guidelines, and training.

MID-TERM (3-5 YEARS)

- » We will recruit corner store owners to participate in a “How to Become a Healthy Corner Store” training.
- » We will advocate for the adoption of model healthy retail ordinances in communities with food deserts.
- » We will certify at least 20 stores as healthy corner stores.

LONG-TERM (5+ YEARS)

- » There will be at least one certified healthy corner store within a half-mile of census tracts designated as food deserts.
- » Eighty percent of participating corner stores will be in compliance with healthy corner store policies and guidelines.
- » Legislation is passed supporting healthy options in corner stores in the inner-ring suburbs.

COMPLETE STREETS

SHORT-TERM (1-2 YEARS)

- » The Cuyahoga County Planning Commission’s complete streets tool kit will be distributed to 100% of communities within Cuyahoga County.
- » We will host a series of complete streets trainings targeting municipal engineers and planners.
- » We will determine the number of miles of roads in Cuyahoga County that currently incorporate complete streets principles.

MID-TERM (3-5 YEARS)

- » All of Cuyahoga County’s inner-ring suburbs will adopt complete streets ordinances or resolutions.
- » At least half of Cuyahoga County’s outer-ring suburbs will adopt complete streets ordinances or resolutions.
- » We will adopt a plan for a network of protected bike boulevards within the City of Cleveland.
- » We will align safe routes to school plans with complete streets tool kit guidelines.

LONG-TERM (5+ YEARS)

- » Cuyahoga County will develop a plan for a network of protected bike boulevards for Cuyahoga County.
- » We will pursue funds to implement a pilot network of at least 10 miles of protected bike boulevards within Cuyahoga County, outside of the City of Cleveland.

SHARED USE AGREEMENT

SHORT-TERM (1-2 YEARS)

- » We will build capacity among community-serving governmental and non-governmental institutions on how to develop, implement, and evaluate shared use agreements.
- » We will collect, map, and share data to identify potential shared use facilities and gather community feedback on physical activity opportunity needs.
- » We will develop and disseminate a shared use local resource guide.

MID-TERM (3-5 YEARS)

- » We will formalize a community-based process for ongoing identification of resident physical activity opportunity needs.
- » We will create a process for linking individuals or organizations interested in providing physical activity (or other) programming with organizations that have facilities available for shared use.
- » We will identify ways to publicize opportunities at shared use sites to members of the community to increase utilization of program and/or facilities.

LONG-TERM (5+ YEARS)

- » There will be an increased number of facilities with formal shared use agreement policies.
- » There will be an increased number of residents who feel that they have easy access to opportunities for physical activity.
- » There will be increased physical activity among those who previously had limited access to opportunities for physical activity.

Subcommittee Structure

The anchor organization and individual responsible for this subcommittee is:

The Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods at Case Western Reserve University (PRCHN)

Erika Trapl, PhD

Assistant Professor, Epidemiology and Biostatistics

Associate Director, CWRU Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods



The PRCHN, initially funded in 2009, is one of 26 Prevention Research Centers funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The PRCHN has been an active member of HIP-Cuyahoga serving on the steering committee since its inception and now serving as the HEAL anchor organization. The PRCHN was selected to serve as the anchor due to its ongoing involvement in food access and youth physical activity projects.

For more information on this subcommittee or to get involved, please contact:

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