

BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES IN MICHIGAN

Funding, training, and technical assistance jump-start the community process

Public Health Problem

- Michigan has higher rates of chronic disease than the country as a whole.
- Unhealthy eating, physical inactivity, and tobacco exposure are three risk factors that contribute significantly to the development of many chronic diseases.
- Influencing the environment in the many places where people live, work, and play makes it easier for them to buy and eat healthy food, be physically active, and not smoke - vital steps for preventing chronic disease.

Program

- The Building Healthy Communities Project developed from an initial state-funded competitive grant program to a wider partnership that leveraged funding from the US Department of Agriculture Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program in a one-to-one match with state and local dollars. Local agencies are funded, trained and provided with technical assistance to apply a strategic process to planning and implementing evidence-based policy and environmental changes. Examples of these changes are establishing farmers markets, building walking and biking trails and health promotion and education.
- Partnership with Michigan State University Extension now enables funding of seven local health departments and eight county extension agencies covering twenty-five counties and reaching more than 283,000 residents, to enable them to assess their communities and implement nutrition, physical activity, and tobacco education and policy change.

Impact

- This project helped local coalitions leverage close to a million and a half dollars in additional funding to support their work. Joining two funding streams, state and federal, led to a more comprehensive community project.
- Policy, built-environment, and educational results for the project communities include:
 - Eleven trails covering almost sixty miles and seven parks were created or enhanced with benches, lighting, and signage and equipment. Walking maps and community fitness classes were provided to residents
 - Five new farmers market locations opened with access to Electronic Benefits Transfer transactions for food stamp recipients.
 - Six counties passed new, clean indoor air ordinances.
 - Seven new school or community gardens were created.
 - Many healthy food taste tests, nutrition education classes, and healthy lifestyle booklets were provided to individuals, families, and day care centers
 - Several counties designated workplaces, trails, and beaches as smoke-free.

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