



# Project Plan

## Healthy Environment Policy Initiative Columbia

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There will be a six-month **planning period** at the start of Columbia's Healthy Environment Policy Initiative (HEPI). During this time, the existing **five-step plan** - based on developing a vision, energizing the community, institutionalizing the task at hand, identifying and pursuing goals, and ongoing evaluation – will be refined and an **action plan** will be determined.

### Project Plan: Five Key Steps

#### 1. Develop the Project Vision (see over)

The first step is to develop a project vision that is shared by members of the partnership and target population (people living in Columbia's low-income and minority community).

#### 2. Energize the Community and Partnership

Engagement with members of the target population will be essential to the success of this project and the Community Issues Management system (see "CIM System" handout) is one way to do this. The project will be launched with a partnership-building, action-oriented Policy Summit.

#### 3. Institutionalize the Project

To give the project more muscle, the partnership will seek to establish the Healthy Environment Policy Board (see "Policy Approach" handout). In the most popular scenario, this body would serve as an official advisory committee to the Columbia City Council and would be set up by City ordinance.

#### 4. Identify and Pursue Focused Goals

Numerous specific policy ideas for improving the food and physical activity environment for underserved youth have been proposed (see "Policy Approach" handout). These will be evaluated, prioritized, and aggressively pursued.

#### 5. Collect Evidence and Optimize (see over)

Project evaluation will be carried out at multiple levels.



### Key Steps

Develop vision  
Energize partnership  
Institutionalize project  
Pursue focused goals  
Collect evidence

## Project Vision

A collective vision for this project is emerging. It will be a unifying theme, an idea that will be shared initially by the partnership and target population, later by a growing band of advocates, then by the policymakers, and ultimately by the community at large.

In this Vision, all Columbians, especially children and families living in diverse, low-income neighborhoods will have:

- Access to affordable, good-quality, nutritious foods close to their homes
- A safe, socially-connected environment which supports outdoor play and the use of active travel modes for local journeys



The Vision will incorporate the following values:

- Focus on underserved and minority children
- Change initiatives that support and strengthen families
- Change initiatives that make the healthy choice the easy and automatic choice
- A process that emphasizes consultation with the community it intends to serve
- Efforts that are integrated, comprehensive and self-sustaining

These values and this vision will drive the work of Columbia's Healthy Environment Policy Initiative (HEPI) partnership and the various policy research and advocacy structures it will establish.

## Evaluation Plan

### HEPI Evaluation Team (University of Missouri)

- Stephen Sayers, PhD: Health promotion in low-income communities
- Rebecca Johnson, PhD, RN: Barriers to physical activity in minority populations
- Joseph LeMaster, MD, MPH: Effects of exercise on chronic disease processes

### Targets for Evaluation

- Evaluate community needs
- Evaluate candidate policies for anticipated effectiveness and likelihood of public support
- Evaluate implemented policies for success

### External Evaluation

- Project staff time (0.25 FTE) has been budgeted to work as an Evaluation Liaison with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's external evaluation consultant.

## Anticipated Challenges

### 1. Creation of the HEPB

The mission of the Healthy Environment Policy Board (HEPB) will be to research policy approaches, make recommendations, develop policy language, and advocate to the City Council, Board of Education, etc.

As an official City of Columbia advisory board, the HEPB will have substantial influence, but its formation may be opposed. In this case, the HEPB will be established as a self-organized, grassroots coalition advocating for policies in local government and private organizations, and there may be advantages to this arrangement.

### 2. Resistance to HEPB Recommendations

There will probably be internal resistance from city government and external resistance from individuals and community groups to some of the anticipated policy recommendations. There is always opposition to new ways of doing things, extra work or increased funding may become necessary, and people's business interests may be affected.

To maximize the chances of success, the HEPB will include representation from all the stakeholders and comprehensive public outreach will be conducted to explain the benefits of the new policies.

### 3. Comprehensive change and sustainability

Implementing comprehensive policy changes that target food systems, the nutritional environment, transportation, and the built environment, will be extremely challenging. However, valuable lessons can be learned from the emerging Food Policy Council movement in North America.

Columbia's experience with promoting active transportation over the last 10 years suggests that hard work, positive public communications, and commitment to the vision make up a recipe for success and sustainability.