



# Making Kane County Fit For Kids

## Kane County

### The problem

Overweight and obesity has become an alarming trend in the nation, contributing to a number of chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, other health conditions, and premature death. Childhood obesity is of particular concern, since lifestyles established at an early age often persist through adulthood. Across Kane County, 37% of the children are either overweight or obese.

While many factors can determine the health of residents, local land use planning, policies, programs, and regulations can address a number of them. Decisions about how we choose to use land have tremendous impact on the health and safety of residents. Land use policies and regulations determine, for example, access to parks and recreation, healthy transportation options such as biking and walking, and opportunities for community gardening and growing fruits and vegetables locally.

### The solution

In recognizing the importance of planning and policies in fighting the obesity epidemic, Kane County launched the [Fit for Kids](#) (FFK) campaign in 2008 to create strategies to guide their activities over the next decade. The campaign began with a Leadership Summit that included representatives from an extensive list of organizations, agencies, community partners, and health care providers. The Summit was attended by more than 100 leaders from Kane County municipalities, school districts, park districts businesses, faith communities, health care providers, health and social service agencies, as well as local and state elected officials.

### The process

One product of the Summit was the development of four strategic action principles:

1. Develop land use, planning and other public policies that foster and support physical activity for all in our communities;
2. Assure that fresh fruits and vegetables are affordable and accessible to all families in our communities;
3. Support a culture of wellness and health promotion in our workplaces, schools, homes, communities and other institutions;
4. Provide parents and children with reliable, up-to-date information in multiple settings regarding healthy physical activity and eating habits.

In 2010, the county held another summit to gain input and ideas from a diverse group of county leaders and citizens. Nine workgroups were formed to create the plan, focusing on areas such as the built and natural environment, economic strength, family, culture and community, and other health and wellness related areas.

Janie Maxwell, Fit for Kids Coordinator with the Kane County Health Department, says that the action items identified by these groups have moved into the implementation stage, where people are working together on ways to make them come to life.

### Overview

Kane County launched their Fit for Kids campaign in 2008 to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic by 2020. The effort resulted in the Fit Kids 2020 Plan adopted in 2011, representing the work of over 80 community stakeholders, volunteering over 1000 hours of time.

### CMAP Resources

- [GO TO 2040 Chapter on Livable Communities](#)
- [Food Policy Strategy Paper](#)
- [Health Strategy Report, October 2009](#)

### GO TO 2040

#### Recommendation:

#### Livable Communities –

*Encourage formation of formal collaborative planning efforts*



*Aurora market cooking demonstration*

### For more information

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A public-private partnership, the “FFK Funders’ Consortium,” was established with several county departments, the Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley and the United Way of Elgin. The Consortium raises and disperses mini-grants to support community-based initiatives (30 so far) to make the program a success. To date, more than \$330,000 has been awarded to the community to support the plan. Past projects include funding for a food bank consortium to purchase refrigeration units allowing them to offer fresh produce to clients, new playground equipment at a neighborhood soccer field providing a place for children to play, and equipment for farmers’ markets to accept Link cards (formerly food stamps) to help lower-income residents purchase fresh produce. Kane is also one of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s 50 Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities grantees.

The [Fit Kids 2020 Plan](#) (adopted April 2011) coincided with development of Kane County’s 2040 Conceptual Land Use Strategy, providing an opportunity to integrate the two plans. In fact, the overarching theme of the 2040 Plan is “Healthy People, Healthy Living, Healthy Communities,” and five of the twelve recommended strategies in the Plan directly relate to public health. The 2040 Land Use Plan was adopted in May of 2012.

### Community considerations

The Fit Kids 2020 Plan was created by Kane County residents on behalf of children’s health, and represents the work of over 80 community stakeholders and 1000 hours of volunteer time, attesting to the commitment and investment of Kane County residents in the program.

### Outcomes

The Fit Kids 2020 Plan was adopted by the Kane County Board, local school boards, park districts, municipalities, community organizations, and a church. Community members and associations are applying the strategies in the plan to affect change in their own organizations and spheres of influence.

A number of initiatives have grown out of the plan. With the adoption of the County’s 2040 Plan in May 2012, the Kane County Planning Cooperative was established to implement the integrated plans, and will serve as a forum and provide assistance to local governments.

### Lessons learned

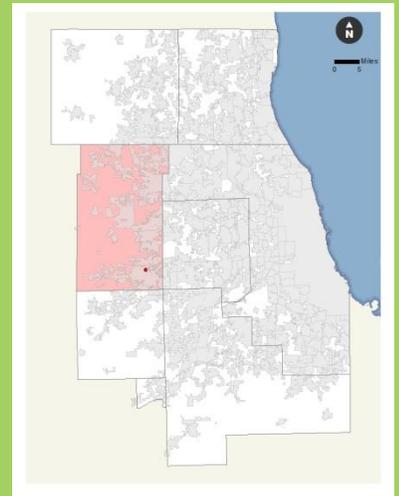
Fit Kids 2020 enjoys a broad-base of support and a large pool of partners to implement the plan: elected officials and leaders put their energy and resources into the process from the start, and community members have been involved in all aspects.

Ms. Maxwell said that focusing on system, policy, and environmental change was a challenge. It required educating partners to help them reframe their work to reach for broader goals than the programs they were accustomed to thinking about, which were typically designed to help a narrow band of individuals.

“Interdepartmental cooperation was critical to achieving long range, integrated plans,” noted Ms. Maxwell. “The skill sets of planning and health were complementary. Bringing health and development together also facilitated our partners working on integrated approaches, going beyond their normal scope of work. As a result, the long range plans are stronger, integrated, and more comprehensive.”

Contact Lindsay Banks ([lbanks@cmap.illinois.gov](mailto:lbanks@cmap.illinois.gov)) to submit a case study.

### Location Map:



### Additional Resources

- [Robert Woods Johnson Foundation Grant](#)
- [Community Transformation Grant \(CTG\) program](#)
- [Healthy Eating Research: Building Evidence to Prevent Childhood Obesity](#)



School bike parking