



Buffalo, NY

▲ Community Example from Chapter 1 of "Lessons for Leaders:"
Lessons in Community Capacity Building

Community Background

An extreme drop in population, high poverty rates and old infrastructure were affecting the health of residents in Buffalo in 2003 when the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, Inc., began its healthy communities work. That's when it received an *Active Living by Design* grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). As efforts continued through *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* (HKHC), the partnership enhanced quality relationships, both within and outside its community, in order to achieve healthy community change.

Community Action

Realizing that several of its HKHC policy targets would require engagement and buy-in from city staff and officials, the Buffalo partnership set goals to build and strengthen these relationships. The partnership increased education through eight policy briefs based on comprehensive healthy eating and active living community assessments. City staff and community members valued the briefs, which set the stage for two food policy summits and one Complete Streets summit. Each summit targeted specific audiences, with whom the partnership sought to strengthen relationships, through policy-maker sessions, public forums, research roundtables and tours at various community sites. As a result, many city staff members and elected officials are now active participants on the city's Complete Streets Coalition and the Food Policy Council of Buffalo and Erie County.

The partnership also helped city staff engage citizens who did not regularly participate in city processes. Ten trainings prepared community members to participate in the Green Code process to revise the 60-year-old land use plans and zoning codes. In addition, the Buffalo partnership supported youth and family sessions, providing food and children's activities to enable families to participate.

The Buffalo partnership also maximized the learning network opportunities offered by the RWJF and HKHC National Program Office to develop strong relationships outside the community. Through Leadership for Healthy Communities (LHC), the partnership sent City Councilman David Rivera to an LHC meeting where he learned from and connected with his peers from around the country. Councilman Rivera credits the conference for igniting his Healthy Communities initiative. The partnership also developed a relationship with ChangeLab Solutions, starting with a request for basic advice and expanding to a collaboration on webinar presentations, grant proposals and formal reviews of local policies.

Finally, the Buffalo partnership recognized and embraced the value of the HKHC peer network and hosted site visits from fellow HKHC partnerships in Milledgeville, Georgia, and Moore and Montgomery counties in North Carolina to share its work on Complete Streets, bicycle-pedestrian policy and environmental change, and other healthy community strategies. According to a Buffalo partner, "Some of our best connections were made through community leaders coming to Buffalo to learn from us—but in the end, it was mutually beneficial."