

# Healthy Austin

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Strategic Plan for  
Community Health Improvement

**Executive Summary**

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## Healthy Austin Coalition

*Coalition Coordinator:* Candice Sanders

### Members:

American Kidney Fund  
Austin Chamber of Commerce  
Austin Cook County Clinic  
Austin Family Counseling Center  
Austin YMCA  
Cares Chicago  
Chicago Police Department, Domestic Violence Program  
Chicago Women in Trades  
Circle Family Care  
Congressman Daniel K. Davis  
Eyes on Austin  
Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition  
Jewish Children's Bureau  
Lawndale Christian Health Center  
Loretto Hospital  
New Age Services  
PCC Community Wellness Center  
Peace Corner Youth Center  
Prevention Partnership, Inc.  
South Austin Coalition Community Council (SACCC)  
San Miguel School  
Sister House  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
Vital Products  
West District Health Council  
West Suburban Hospital  
Western & Southern Financial Group  
Westside Health Authority (WHA)  
Westside Health Partnership

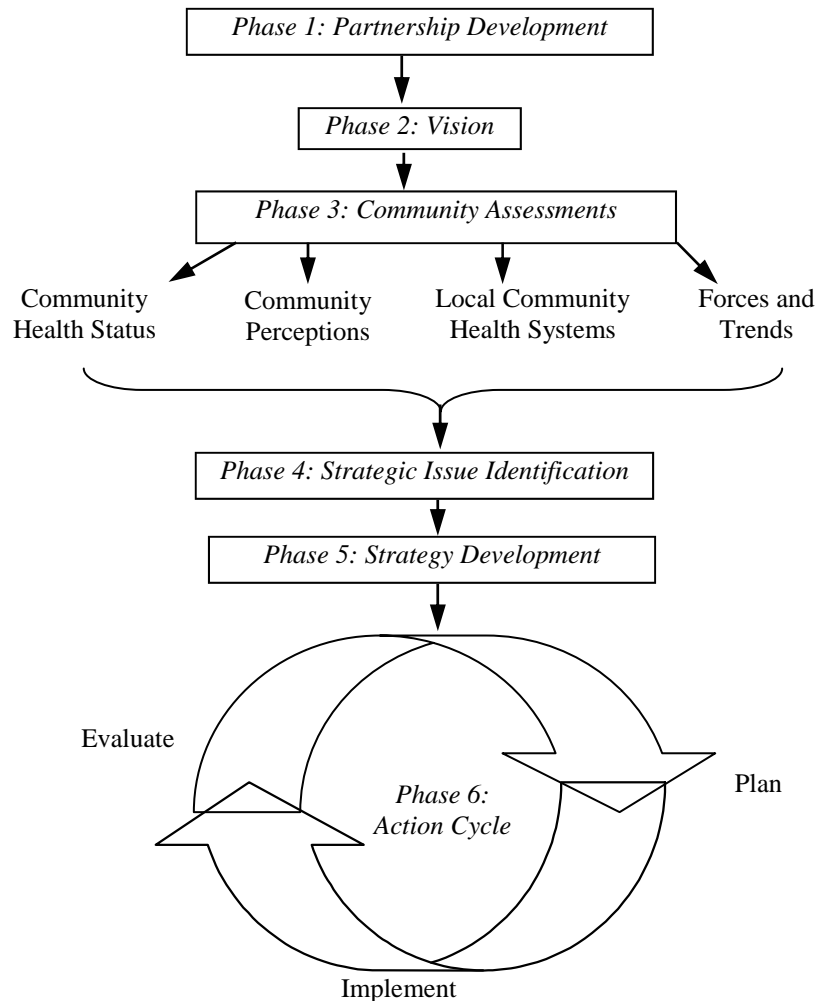
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# Healthy Austin's Strategic Plan for Community Health Improvement

The Healthy Austin Coalition (HAC) was formed in August 2003, and is supported by the Chicago Center for Community Partnerships at the Chicago Department of Public Health. Coalition members followed a community health improvement planning model adapted from the National Association of County and City Health Officials and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP). The coalition assessed the Austin community's strengths, assets, and needs and formulated a plan to address identified concerns.

## Healthy Austin's Road To Community Health Improvement



## Healthy Austin Vision Statement

Healthy Austin defines health as a state of well-being that is nurtured by the total environment of the individual. The infrastructure for building a nurturing environment includes a set of relationships which create positive images of oneself, family, community, county and world. It also includes opportunities within the environment for the individual to develop and use their spiritual faith, gifts and talents for creating wholeness for themselves and others.

**Community Assessments**

**Community Health Status Assessment**

The Austin community area is located on the west side of Chicago. Its neighbors include West Garfield Park, Humboldt Park, Belmont Cragin, Hermosa, and the suburban areas of Oak Park and River Forest.

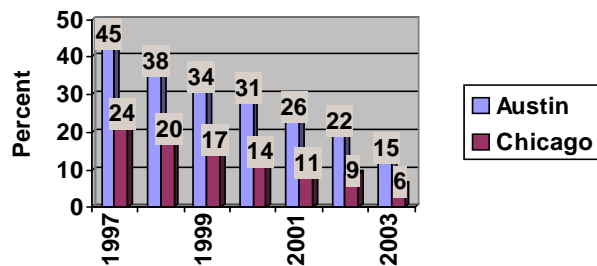
With a population of 117,527, Austin is the most densely populated community in the Chicago area, and if taken out of Chicago would be considered the sixth largest city in Illinois. Among those living in Austin, nearly 90% are African American, approximately 5% are White, and 4% identify themselves as Hispanic.

For the Austin community the leading causes of death are generally consistent with those found in Chicago as a whole. However, Austin has experienced higher rates of death as a result of diabetes (32 per 100,000), homicide (49), and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) (21), compared with Chicago at 25, 21, and 11 respectively.

Since 1997, the Austin community has had a consistently high percentage of children test positive for lead poisoning. Despite the fact that this percentage has been decreasing steadily, among those children screened for lead poisoning in 2003, 14% tested positive. Additionally, the lead levels in Austin are more than double what they are in Chicago.

According to the 2000 census approximately 10% of Austin’s population is unemployed and nearly 47% of the population lives at 200% of the poverty level or below. In both cases, this exceeds what is found in many of the surrounding areas as well as the city of Chicago.

**Children with Elevated Blood Lead Levels (EBLLs)**



**Community Perceptions Assessment**

Six focus groups were conducted with Austin area adolescents, adults, and seniors to gather community perspectives on health and social issues that are affecting the Austin community.

| Community Perceptions Assessment Findings |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Focus Group                               | Key Issues                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Adolescents                               | Role models<br>More options for free contraceptives<br>Health care for mentally ill<br>Education                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Adults                                    | Cleaner neighborhoods                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Seniors                                   | Truancy among students<br>More senior centers<br>Access to healthy foods                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Common Themes Across Groups               | Health related issues (e.g., STD/HIV, cancer, diabetes, obesity, stress)<br>Drugs<br>Crime/safety<br>Employment opportunities for residents<br>More opportunities for youth<br>Affordable housing<br>Health insurance coverage<br>Counseling for youth<br>Ex-offender re-entry to the community<br>Police/community relations<br>Health education for youth<br>More free health services in close proximity |

**Local Community Health Systems Assessment**

This assessment was conducted using data collected from three different sources: Community Landscape Asset Mapping (CLAM); the Chicago Food Systems Collaborative Market Basket Study and; the Austin Community Health Profile as developed by the Chicago Department of Public Health Chicago Health and Health Systems Project.

The CLAM involved conducting a *Looking Around* assessment, a customized survey for the Austin community that provides a block-by-block assessment of a variety of quality of life indicators through community resident observation.

**Key Findings– Looking Around:**

- 356 blocks assessed
- 48% had at least one vacant lot
- 43% had houses with block watch signs
- 19% had police presence
- 27% had at least one abandoned house
- 12% had at least one abandoned business

The second source of information came from The Chicago Food Systems Collaborative Market Basket Study which was conducted in Austin and neighboring Oak Park. In February and March 2003, eight teams composed of students from Loyola and Chicago State Universities paired with community members recruited by the Westside Health Authority, visited 134 stores in the area to check what foods they did and did not carry, the price of those foods, and the quality of their produce.

**Key Findings– Market Basket Study:**

- Austin is served by 82 food stores. Of those, there is one chain supermarket, two discount supermarkets, three independent supermarkets, 50 corner stores, seven drug or convenience stores, and 19 liquor stores with food.
- Out of all the corner stores, 60% carry either little or no produce.
- Per capita there is one large food store for every 19,578 residents.
- All poor quality fresh produce found was at corner stores and liquor stores with food in Austin.
- In Austin there are 35 corner stores and liquor stores that carried food including fresh produce, 19 had at least one poor quality item.
- The price of food at discount supermarkets is significantly lower than Chain Supermarkets.
- Discount supermarkets did not carry many items of local interest (e.g., sweet potatoes, corn meal and, grits).

The third source of information was the Austin Community Health Profile, which contained a mix of health status and health resource data for the community area.

**Key Findings– Community Health Profile:**

- There are 4 community-based health centers in Austin and a 5<sup>th</sup> in Oak Park just over the Austin/Oak Park border of Austin Boulevard. Among these, 49% of the patients are covered by Medicaid or Kidcare.
- There is 1 school-based health center
- There is 1 hospital located directly within the borders of Austin; however, 2 more hospitals are located just outside the Austin boundary in Oak Park.

*Forces and Trends Assessment*

Coalition members identified the following external forces and trends that would potentially impact the health of the community:

- Drug culture and related issues
- Concern for healthier lifestyles
- Jobs
- Coordination of system/decision making at the community level
- Increased community collaboration
- Tax increases and distribution
- Schools (multiple factors)
- Ex-Offenders
- Housing

**Strategic Issue Identification**

Healthy Austin identified strategic issues by examining the combined results of all four assessments. The identified issues represent the prominent crosscutting findings that need to be addressed to reach the coalition’s vision.

*Strategic Issues*

**How can the Healthy Austin Coalition:**

1. Work to reduce the dominance of the drug culture in the Austin community?
2. Work to improve the physical environment for Austin community residents to live in a healthy environment?
3. Work to increase knowledge about health issues and threats in Austin?
4. Work to increase awareness and knowledge of health services in Austin?
5. Work to bridge/link resources that encourage economic development in Austin?
6. Empower and strengthen involvement in community planning and development for Austin?

**Action Area and Strategy Development**

To address the strategic issues, the Healthy Austin Coalition developed a series of strategies grouped in three action areas.

*1: Economic Development*

- Link Austin residents to employment opportunities.
- Provide support for Austin based businesses.

2: *Community Development and Education*

- Create opportunities for community members to participate in educational programs that support them in preparing for future employment.
- Work to increase participation in literacy and education programs

3: *Wellness Promotion*

- Raise awareness about health issues in the Austin community.
- Work to empower community residents to address their own health needs.
- Identify and connect residents with health resources and services.
- Foster collaborations between area agencies and organizations.

**Action Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation**

To address priority strategies, the HAC is in the process of developing an action plan. Coalition members continually assess membership to assure that key players are involved in the work of the coalition. Members of the coalition participate in action area sub-committees and plan, develop, and implement the specific actions that address each strategy. Critical to the success of each action plan has been the creation and strengthening of collaborations to best leverage available resources.

As the coalition changes and new issues emerge, the coalition will adapt as necessary, revisiting the assessments, the vision and membership on a regular basis.

| Action Area Committee                            | Current Activities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AA 1: Economic Development</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecting local business owners with business consulting and coaching support.</li> <li>• Linking community residents with job readiness and employment training programs.</li> </ul>                                                               |
| <b>AA 2: Community Development and Education</b> | <p>Partnering with local university to provide courses for residents that are focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancement of reading and math skills</li> <li>• Computer literacy</li> <li>• Job readiness skills (e.g., resume writing and interviewing)</li> </ul> |
| <b>AA3: Wellness and Promotion</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing Austin specific resource directory.</li> <li>• Partnering with local agencies to help support activities directed at increasing residents awareness about specific health issues.</li> </ul>                                              |



Working Together for a Healthier Chicago

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**Chicago Center for Community Partnerships**

The Healthy Austin Coalition is a partner of and supported by the Chicago Center for Community Partnerships (the Center) at the Chicago Department of Public Health. The goal of the Center is to establish and support a sustainable network of community-based partnerships that have the capacity to identify and implement local health improvement priorities. Center staff provide technical assistance to local partnerships in conducting and implementing health improvement plans.

The Center currently supports four other community area coalitions:

[Healthy Albany Park](#)  
[Healthy Chicago Lawn](#)  
[Healthy Hermosa](#)  
[Healthy South Chicago](#)

**For more information, contact the Chicago Center for Community Partnerships:**

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