

West Chicago is proud of its rich history, diverse culture, active art community, and natural and public amenities. The West Chicago City Museum, Gallery 200, and its historic architecture and public art are among many of its great attractions. Some of West Chicago's favorite community festivals include Blooming Fest - a downtown garden festival that combines the West Chicago Garden Club's popular plant sale with the car show, a craft show, children's activities, music, and food; Railroad Days – a carnival with parade, fireworks, entertainment, food, Fine Arts Fiesta; and the colorful dance performances, festive music and equestrian pageantry of West Chicago's Mexican Independence Day Parade and Celebration.

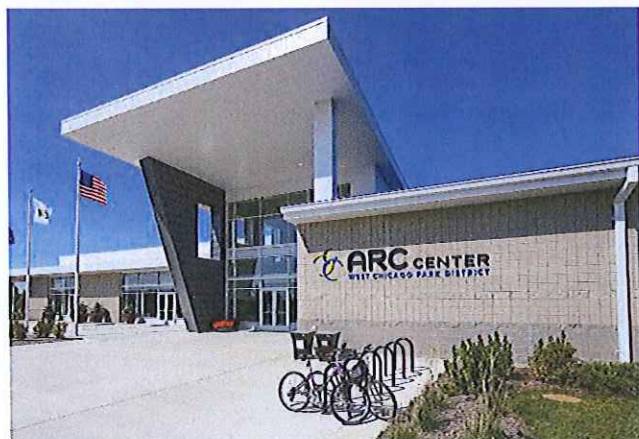
The Illinois Prairie Path, a 61 mile recreational nature trail system that winds its way through West Chicago, provides residents with a glimpse of wildlife and beautiful scenery, with many hikers, runners, and bikers enjoying these areas. The West Chicago Prairie is one of northern Illinois' premier natural areas. The 316-acre site contains the greatest plant diversity in the county with over 600 plant and wildlife species. Many of the nine walking/hiking trails that meander through the site connect to the Illinois Prairie Path, which extends past the preserve boundaries into Reed-Keppler Park.



*West Chicago Prairie, DuPage County*



The West Chicago Park District's ARC Center (Athletics, Recreation, Community) is located in the heart of Reed-Keppler Park, and offers a variety of fitness options and programs for the entire family including a fitness center, locker rooms, 3-court gymnasium, tree house play area, walking/running track, multipurpose gym, dance and fitness studios and meeting rooms.



*The ARC Center*





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### III. PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Healthy West Chicago began in early 2014 as a collaboration among many organizations committed to strengthening the health of West Chicago through increasing healthy eating and physical activity. The project was initiated by Mayor Pineda and the City of West Chicago with School District 33's WeGo Together for Kids, the West Chicago Park District, Western DuPage Chamber of Commerce, DuPage FORWARD, Cadence Health, and the Mexican Cultural Center of West Chicago. Funding and support for this project was provided by Cadence Health and WeGo Together for Kids through their partnership with the United Way of DuPage/West Cook. Seven Generations Ahead was contracted to facilitate the project.

The planning process brought together community residents, institutional leaders, stakeholders, and local and external technical experts in developing goals, goal targets and strategies, and identifying funding resources within a range of healthy community topic areas. The plan's goals of increasing healthy eating and physical activity are reflected in strategies that address transportation, food, community development, open space, biking and walking infrastructure, physical education, and broader community education. The process and resulting plan position the community for implementation of the plan's priority strategies in 2015.

- A. Core Team**
- B. Task Force**
- C. Community Surveys**
- D. Community Forums**
- E. Assessment of Existing Conditions**
- F. Action Plan**

#### A. Core Team

Healthy West Chicago is directed by a Core Team of individuals and institutions invested in improving nutrition and physical fitness for people who live and/or work in the City of West Chicago. This team meets monthly and includes representatives from the City, school district, park district, Chamber of Commerce, county health department, hospital, Mexican cultural center and more. For a complete list of Core Team members, please see Appendix A.

Oak Park-based Seven Generations Ahead managed the project. Founded in 2001, Seven Generations Ahead's mission is to promote the development of ecologically sustainable and healthy communities. SGA works with local government, community and private sector leaders to help communities make the changes they need to create a healthy and sustainable future. Learn more at [www.sevengenerationsahead.org](http://www.sevengenerationsahead.org)

#### B. Task Force

The Healthy West Chicago Task Force is interested in achieving healthy community goals and ensuring a high quality of life for all community residents and stakeholders. The Task Force's interest is in

infrastructure and a built environment which makes the healthy choice the easy choice, supporting policies, systemic changes, educational programs, and messaging that supports healthy community goals. This team met every few months in 2014 to weigh in on key decisions, support implementation, and contribute to major Healthy West Chicago decisions.

The Healthy West Chicago Task Force included the Core Team and all top level institutional leaders or designees including the Mayor of West Chicago, CEOs, superintendents, executive directors, etc. of park district, schools, library, colleges/universities, township, county, business associations, major employers, health department, hospitals, faith-based congregation leaders, and other key institutions. For a list of Task Force members, see Appendix B.

The Task Force guided the overall project, and functioned as the decision-making body that worked directly with the Core Team. The Task Force collaborated with the Core Team to make decisions regarding community engagement, baseline metrics and success indicators, plan development, and establishment of a long-term organizational and financial infrastructure that supports ongoing implementation, data aggregation, communications, and reporting.

### C. Community Survey

The Healthy West Chicago project launched with a community survey, which was distributed on the City's website, through local businesses, and at community events in both Spanish and English. A total 577 surveys were completed by people who live, work, and attend school in West Chicago. The goal of the survey was to measure residents' perception of current community health status and gather opinions on how the community can improve health through better eating and increased physical activity.

The survey results identified a great disparity between current levels of health and the desire for healthy living. The surveys found that while more than 93% of respondents felt that increasing healthy eating and physical activity were important, only 26% of respondents felt that West Chicago was either "healthy" or "very healthy."

#### Question 1

Is increasing healthy eating important to you and your family?



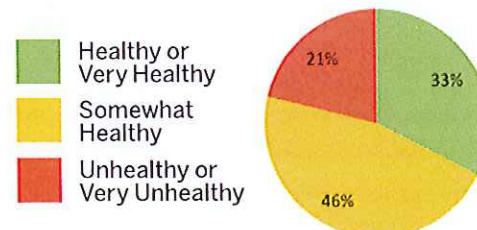
#### Question 2

Is increasing physical activity important to you and your family?



#### Question 3

Do you think West Chicago is a "Healthy Community"? How would you rate West Chicago?





## KEY FINDINGS

- Only 11% of residents reported their personal health as “healthy” or “very healthy.”
- Members of the community feel that there is a lack of affordable, healthy food in the community. 92% of respondents believe that increasing access to healthy food is important.
- Respondents suggested that West Chicago increase their opportunities for physical activity by increasing green space, parks, and bicycle/pedestrian access.
- The community views education about healthy living, especially for children, as a major driver to improve community health.
- Several respondents expressed concerns about equity in the community, as some individuals with fewer resources may not be able to afford many of the existing facilities and programs available in West Chicago.

## HEALTHY EATING BEHAVIORS

The primary concern among residents was the lack of availability of affordable fresh and local produce. While 92% of individuals responded that access to healthy food is “somewhat important” or “very important” to them, multiple community members expressed specific concerns about the cost and availability of healthy foods. Several respondents also mentioned a desire to expand the farmers’ market, create community gardens, and improve the nutritional quality of school snacks, breakfasts, and lunches.

## EDUCATION

Respondents identified education as a major priority for the West Chicago community. 91% of the survey results indicated that educating the public about the importance of healthy food is either “somewhat important” or “very important.” Many individuals expressed the desire for cooking, gardening, and nutritional community workshops. Furthermore, several respondents identified children as a leverage point for system wide changes throughout the entire community.

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The survey responses indicated a widespread desire for more opportunities for physical activity, with 76% of respondents indicating that it was “very important.” Community-wide suggestions recommended increasing the number of organized sports, running/walking events, and other structured

“People, most importantly children, need to be empowered to make a healthy choice regarding food and exercise.”

**GINA STEINBRECHER**  
(lives and works in  
West Chicago)

“Teach kids why healthy eating is important and how to read labels to select minimally processed foods with real ingredients and to understand portion sizes. Maybe kids will teach the parents.”

(resident of  
West Chicago)

“[West Chicago] should consider offering and promoting open gardening space so that residents can easily grow healthy foods and offer these to the community.”

(resident of West  
Chicago)



group activities. Furthermore, the responses indicated a desire to make the community more bicycle and pedestrian-friendly to reduce their dependence on automobiles. Several respondents specifically mentioned the lack of safe walking and biking trails in West Chicago. Many people also requested that the city create more usable parks and green space, with over half of the survey respondents indicating that access to outdoor recreation and park areas is "very important."

## D. Community Forums

Following completion of the Community Survey, Healthy West Chicago held community forums to provide residents and community partners with an overview of the Healthy West Chicago initiative; a summary of survey results on what West Chicagoans think are the top priorities for increasing healthy eating and physical activity in the community, and an opportunity to provide input on what strategies should be included in the *Healthy West Chicago Community Action Plan* to increase healthy eating and physical activity. The forums were for residents (parents, members of faith-based congregations, seniors and the community at-large); businesses through the Chamber of Commerce; teachers; youth; and leaders of West Chicago's community institutions (Park District, Library, City government, schools, congregations, community organizations, Chamber of Commerce, hospitals, and other large institutions). They were conducted in English and Spanish, and ideas were used for the creation of the *Healthy West Chicago Community Action Plan*.

The following forums were conducted

- Institutions – Healthy West Chicago Task Force
- Council of Governments (brief overview presentation)
- School Families
- PTO at Trinity Church Pre-School
- PTO at Wegner Elementary School
- Faith Based Forum
- Park District Employees
- We Go Together for Kids Service Providers
- Youth Forum (Community High School)
- Senior Forum
- Community Forum

An additional two sessions were held to provide input into the Action Plan recommendations.

- Plan review and input: Technical Experts
- Plan review and input: Healthy West Chicago Task Force

The first of those review sessions was a technical experts review which included participation and input from the following technical experts in the field of healthy communities: CLOCC (Adam Becker, Executive Director); Active Transportation Alliance (Nancy Wagner); DuPage FORWARD (Ann Marchetti, Consulting Director); DuPage County Health Department (Becky McFarland, Community



Initiatives Coordinator); DuPage County Division of Transportation (Dan Thomas, Trail Coordinator / Principal Planner); Northwestern Medicine/Cadence Health (Patricia Coleman, Manager of Nutrition Services); Kane County Health Department (Jackie Forbes, Health Planner); Community Health Planning for the City of Blue Island (Gita Rampersad, former Manager); and Seven Generations Ahead (Gary Cuneen, Executive Director and Jen Nelson, Program Manager). This experienced group of technical experts provided support for the draft recommendations that were presented and added input from their experience advancing nutrition and physical fitness in the region.

The suggestions from the Technical Experts were incorporated into the Action Plan recommendations which were then presented to the Healthy West Chicago Task Force for review and comment. The Task Force spent time reviewing and discussing the recommendations and provided input into the final recommendations incorporated into this *Healthy West Chicago Community Action Plan*.

## **E. Assessment of Existing Programs, Policies and Initiatives**

Creating a comprehensive *Healthy West Chicago Community Action Plan* required having a clear understanding of how the community is already working to support West Chicago being a healthy place to live. An assessment of existing programs, policies and initiatives helped to identify key opportunities for partnership and collaboration, and helped to demonstrate opportunities for improvement and growth to be integrated into the Action Plan.

This assessment was conducted by Seven Generations Ahead in collaboration with Healthy West Chicago Core Team and Task Force members. Online research and phone calls to agencies and institutions were used to identify a current list of programs, policies and initiatives in the City of West Chicago or DuPage County that support good nutrition and physical activity. The assessment provides only an overview of these resources and further details on each one can be found through the agencies/organizations/websites listed. Please see Appendix E for the Assessment of Existing Programs, Policies and Initiatives.

## **F. Community Action Plan**

The *Healthy West Chicago Community Action Plan* is a roadmap to guide the Core Team, Task Force and key institutional stakeholders in West Chicago. The Action Plan provides objectives to improve nutrition and physical activity. Each of the objectives has a detailed set of strategies and action steps. These are detailed in the next section of this plan.

As this multi-year plan is put into place, some objectives will be tackled in Year 1 and others may take longer to develop and implement. The intent is for this to be a 10-year plan with short, mid and long-term priorities. As strategies are addressed, it is recommended that Healthy West Chicago convene working groups with community-wide representation to address each strategy.

As Healthy West Chicago launches in May 2015, the next step for the Core Team is to work to define an implementation workplan for 2015-2016. This group will also need to work to define the leadership structure for Healthy West Chicago and work to obtain funding for both the administration of this plan as well as specific projects and actions.



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## IV. PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The *Healthy West Chicago Community Action Plan* recommendations are a culmination of community input (survey and forum participation) and technical expert input. Community residents and stakeholders identified objectives, strategies and action steps to help West Chicago to be a healthy community and technical experts reviewed these recommendations and offered expertise on how to reach the desired goals. These recommendations are meant to guide West Chicago over the next 5-10 years as we work to become the healthiest community in the region.

### A. GOAL

#### **HEALTHY WEST CHICAGO GOAL**

**To increase healthy eating and physical activity in the City of West Chicago to make West Chicago one of the healthiest communities in the region.**

### HEALTHY EATING

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>OBJECTIVE A</b> | Increase the Availability of Nutritious Affordable Food Choices in Grocery Stores and Other Food Stores   |
| <b>OBJECTIVE B</b> | Improve Availability of Locally Grown Foods   |
| <b>OBJECTIVE C</b> | Increase the Availability of Healthy and Tasty Choices in Restaurants   |
| <b>OBJECTIVE D</b> | Increase the Availability of Nutritious and Tasty Food in Institutions (Schools, Childcare, Hospitals, etc.) and Limit Access to Unhealthy Food |
| <b>OBJECTIVE E</b> | Increase Knowledge of Residents on Nutrition and Cooking Healthy Meals/ Snacks  |
| <b>OBJECTIVE F</b> | Regulate Food and Beverage Marketing  |

### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>OBJECTIVE A</b> | Increase the Availability of Opportunities for Physical Activity that are Affordable and Accessible Throughout the Community |
| <b>OBJECTIVE B</b> | Develop Safe Roads and Paths for Bicyclists and Pedestrians  |
| <b>OBJECTIVE C</b> | Improve the Use of Public Space for Physical Activity  |
| <b>OBJECTIVE D</b> | Ensure the Safety of Physical Activity Environments  |
| <b>OBJECTIVE E</b> | Increase Knowledge of Residents About the Availability and Importance of Physical Activity Opportunities                     |

## B. HEALTHY EATING OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Healthy West Chicago is working to bring together schools, businesses, restaurants, park district, public health professionals, gardeners, urban planners, health practitioners, and community residents to create a place where access to healthy and local foods is easy and affordable. Healthy West Chicago will work in collaboration with our partners to shape local policies and improve the food system so that fresh and healthy foods are accessible and affordable to everyone living and working in the City of West Chicago. The following objectives will support meeting our healthy eating goal:

### OBJECTIVE A: Increase the availability of nutritious affordable food choices in grocery stores and other food stores

Increase access to grocery stores and markets that sell affordable fresh fruits and vegetables, which will improve the diets of residents, reduce body mass index (BMI) and contribute to the community's economic development.

#### Strategy A-1: Encourage West Chicago Stores to Offer Healthier Foods That Are Affordable

##### ACTION [A-1a]: Create a Healthy West Chicago recognition program:

- Develop parameters for stores to be recognized as a HWC Grocery Store for offering healthy options, conducting nutrition education, participating in the HWC item of the month program, etc.
- Stores could be recognized with a window decal, on social media, etc.

##### ACTION [A-1b]: Create a Food Policy Council:

- Pass a resolution for a food policy council or task force that advances healthy food options and includes supermarkets.
- Supermarket strategies may need to be part of a more comprehensive food retail development program, which could include farmers' markets, specialty food stores and other direct marketing programs.

##### ACTION [A-1c]: Incorporate healthy food access strategies into city design plans or into the City's Comprehensive Plan.

### THE ISSUES AND RESEARCH

Eating a healthier diet that includes more fresh fruits and vegetables helps to reduce the risk of obesity and chronic diseases.<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, many communities across the United States lack access to healthy food options. Research suggests that greater access to supermarkets may be related to a reduced risk of obesity, while greater access to convenience stores may be related to an increased risk for obesity.<sup>41,42,43,44,45</sup>

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**ACTION [A-1d]: Create financial incentives for supermarkets:**

- Consider grants and other incentives that encourage grocery stores to locate in underserved areas.
- Consider Tax Increment Financing (TIF), which allows the redevelopment agency to use the increased property and sales taxes that result from redevelopment projects to repay debts incurred in financing such projects. When plans for TIF districts are reviewed, local governments can consider grocery store access.

**Strategy A-2:** Evaluate the transportation needs of residents without vehicles to determine if additional transportation options are needed. See Active Transportation Section (Physical Activity Objective B) of this Action Plan.

## **THE ISSUES AND RESEARCH**

Local governments can help increase the availability of fresh, healthy and affordable food for children and families. Research on healthy food availability finds: food environments that offer a greater variety of healthy food options at affordable prices may lead to healthier food choices.<sup>46</sup>

Improving the availability and accessibility of farmers' markets is another strategy to increase fresh, healthy food options for children and families. At least two studies have demonstrated that the Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs for elders and lower-income women in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children may lead to improvements in their intake of fruits and vegetables.<sup>47,48</sup>

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## **OBJECTIVE B. Improve availability of locally grown foods**

Increase the availability of fresh, local fruits and vegetables for children and families while supporting rural and urban economies, and in some cases, providing a space for neighbors to socialize.

**Strategy B-1:** Develop a community food growing strategy

**ACTION [B-1a]:** Develop a plan and map for available open spaces for community gardens.

**ACTION [B-1b]:** Expand existing community garden program and work with experts to determine best practices.

**ACTION [B-1c]:** Work with the faith-based community and other civic groups to develop a network of community gardens.

**ACTION [B-1d]:** Implement City of West Chicago program to provide residents with the seeds for a garden bed in exchange for extra produce being donated to the food pantry.



## **Strategy B-2: Support a West Chicago Farmers' Market**

**ACTION [B-2a]: Support continuation and improvement of a West Chicago Farmers Market.**

**ACTION [B-2b]: Support relocating the West Chicago Farmers Market to a more accessible location.**

**ACTION [B-2c]: Encourage farmers' market managers to offer residents in lower-income areas products that are affordable by:**

- Accept Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants.
- Provide financial support to farmers' market operators at the outset. Market managers can then agree to lower vendor fees to farmers so they can offer lower prices.

### **THE ISSUES AND RESEARCH**

Studies have indicated that nutrition information on restaurant menus empowers consumers and influences food choices.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, research indicates that consumers want this information. Six nationally-representative polls have found that between 62 and 87% of Americans support the idea of requiring restaurants to list nutrition information.<sup>50,51</sup>

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### **OBJECTIVE C. Increase the availability of healthy and tasty choices in restaurants**

Encourage people's food choices to shift to healthier items by providing more nutrition information. In order to offset the increase in the availability of fast food, policy-makers can help consumers make healthier choices by encouraging restaurants to offer healthier menu items, decrease portion sizes and post nutritional information on their menus.

#### **Strategy C-1: Encourage Restaurants to Offer Reasonably Sized Portions and Healthy Menu Options**

**ACTION [C-1a]: Create or adapt an existing program into a Healthy West Chicago restaurant recognition program:**

- Recognize restaurants that promote healthier foods and beverages and reasonably-sized portions.
- Help to connect diners to HWC restaurants through social media and citywide publicity.
- Provide restaurant owners with incentives for offering healthier food.

**ACTION [C-1b]: Encourage all West Chicago restaurants to offer a Healthy West Chicago meal or menu item.**



- Help to connect diners to these restaurants through social media and citywide publicity.
- Engage fast food restaurants in creating and highlighting a healthy menu option (eg, have a "Mayor's Choice" healthy menu item.)

**ACTION [C-1c]:** Establish voluntary agreements with restaurant owners who serve healthier options and educate them on the potential fiscal benefits of promoting healthier foods and reasonably-sized portions.

**ACTION [C-1d]:** Formally acknowledge participating restaurants through community events, websites, etc.

#### **Strategy C-2: Encourage Restaurant Menu Labeling**

**ACTION [C-2a]:** Involve local universities or community-based groups to advocate for the support of menu labeling.

**ACTION [C-2b]:** Implement policies requiring restaurants to provide menu labeling, and work with restaurants to list healthier choices on menus.

#### **Strategy C-3: Create Policy Limiting Fast Food Restaurants and Supporting Restaurants with Healthy Menu Choices**

**ACTION [C-3a]:** Enact zoning to promote healthy nutrition by reducing the density of fast food restaurants in West Chicago.

**ACTION [C-3b]:** Enact zoning to promote healthy nutrition by restricting fast food restaurants within a specified distance from schools.

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### **OBJECTIVE D. Increase The Availability Of Nutritious And Tasty Food In Institutions (Schools, Childcare, Hospitals, Etc.) Limit Access To Unhealthy Food**

Help people maintain healthy weights by increasing access to nutritious food, incorporating nutrition education and limiting access to unhealthy food.

#### **Strategy D-1: Analyze Food Pricing and Messaging Within Key Community Institutions That Serve Food (Schools, Hospitals, Park District, Etc.)**

**ACTION [D-1a]:** Review food service and food and beverage vendor contracts, and work with vendors to offer healthier options.



**Strategy D-2: Ensure That Children in Childcare Facilities Have Appealing, Healthy Food and Beverage Choices**

**ACTION [D-2a]:** Support the implementation of state childcare licensing policy changes that require meeting specific nutrition and physical activity standards.

- Encourage accessing Gateway training for childcare centers.
- Explore Illinois Department of Public Health funding for training.

**ACTION [D-2b]:** Incorporate the YMCA's Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) Standards into marketing strategies and training targeting all institutions that provide child-care or after school care services.

**Strategy D-3: Ensure That Students Have Appealing, Healthy Food and Beverage Choices In Schools**

**ACTION [D-3a]:** Pursue the certification of West Chicago schools through the Alliance for a Healthier Generation School Food and Nutrition certification and the USDA Healthier School Challenge, and access technical assistance and training from these organizations to assist with certification.

**ACTION [D-3b]:** Support strong local wellness policies to ensure healthy school food environments by limiting low-nutrient, energy-dense foods in vending machines, à la carte lines, school stores and during school celebrations, as well as by offering healthy snacks.

**ACTION [D-3c]:** Conduct an assessment of school cooking infrastructure and develop funding to support school salad bars and other equipment that will facilitate healthy meals preparation.

**ACTION [D-3d]:** Encourage fundraisers and classroom rewards that are healthy or do not involve food. Policies can address the availability of healthy foods for school meals and before- and after-school programs, and incorporate cafeteria staff training.

**THE ISSUES  
AND RESEARCH**

The Issues and Research  
The school food environment can have a large impact on the dietary intake of children and adolescents—up to 50% of total daily energy intake can be consumed at school. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) sets nutrition standards for these school meal programs, but has less authority to set nutrition standards for competitive foods sold à la carte, in school stores and in vending machines. Although most schools that sell competitive foods offer some nutritious food and beverage options, less nutritious alternatives also have been commonly available. Studies have shown promotion strategies can increase students' purchases of fruits, vegetables and low-fat foods.<sup>52, 53, 54, 55</sup>

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**ACTION [D-3e]:** Enact and support state, district or school policies that prohibit the sale or distribution of high-fat, high-sugar snacks during school celebrations, before or during mealtimes and as fundraisers.

**ACTION [D-3f]:** Develop policies encouraging cafeterias to display healthy side items and snacks at eye level on shelves and positioned near the point of purchase. Additionally, they can request that cafeterias move less healthy options to the back of food displays.

**ACTION [D-3g]:** Work with school wellness committees to support/develop an action plan to meet measurable goals related to nutritious foods and health education. Invite local chefs and nutrition and health experts to serve on the committee.

**ACTION [D-3h]:** Connect food service directors to local farm food aggregators and distributors and track healthy, local food procurement.

**Strategy D-4: Adopt Vending Machine Policies That Either Prohibit the Sale of Unhealthy Foods and Beverages in Facilities or Restrict Vending Machine Sales to Healthy Snacks**

**ACTION [D-4a]:** Develop policies encouraging vending machines to display healthy side items and snacks at eye level.

**ACTION [D-4b]:** Develop policies encouraging vending machines to contain more healthy items than not healthy items.

**ACTION [D-4c]:** Develop policies encouraging vending machines to provide healthy items priced in the same range as other items.

**ACTION [D-4d]:** Eliminate sugar sweetened beverages (sodas, sports drinks, etc.) from vending machines.

**Strategy D-5: Provide Nutrition Education Through Experiential Learning Curricula**

Experiential learning curricula can include school gardens and farm-to-school programs, as well as other educational components that can encourage parents to introduce and provide nutrient-rich foods to children.

**Farm-to-School Programs**

Develop policies and programs that support farm-to-school programs. Farm-to-school programs encourage schools to use locally grown produce for school cafeteria meals, thereby improving nutrition while also providing hands on learning for students.

**ACTION [D-5a]:** Create pilot projects to implement farm-to-school programs.



**ACTION [D-5b]:** Partner with local farmers or farming organizations, nearby universities and colleges, non-profit organizations and the national Farm-to-School organization to develop a program.

**ACTION [D-5c]:** Develop a team to support food service directors implementing farm-to-school activities.

## **THE ISSUES AND RESEARCH**

A growing number of states and school districts are turning to farm-to-school programs to increase the quality and availability of fresh, healthy foods for their students. This program has been in existence in the United States for nearly a decade.<sup>56</sup> School garden programs are another way to connect youth with fresh, healthy foods. According to a study, after students completed their gardening program, their perceptions of vegetables significantly improved, as did their preferences for fruits and vegetables—no such improvements were evident in the control group.<sup>57</sup>

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### **School Gardens**

Edible school gardens integrate gardening and fresh seasonal cooking into curricula, culture and food programs. In addition to the health benefits, edible school gardens involve students in all aspects of farming the garden, including preparing, serving and eating the food.

**ACTION [D-5d]:** Create edible school gardens that integrate gardening and fresh seasonal cooking into curricula, culture and food programs.

**ACTION [D-5-e]:** Convene teachers from various disciplines to utilize curricula that incorporate math, science, nutrition, physical education and other subjects into school garden activities. For example, students can develop and perform taste tests on food from the garden and graph the results.

**ACTION [D-5f]:** Invite representatives from the farming community to serve on the school wellness committee.

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## **OBJECTIVE E. Increase knowledge of residents on nutrition and cooking Healthy meals/snacks**

Empower people to make healthy food choices. Provide hands-on nutrition education activities to give people a chance to explore, prepare, and enjoy fresh, affordable foods.

### **Strategy E-1: Support People in Adopting Healthy Eating Behaviors**

Encourage residents to focus on eating a healthful diet — one that focuses on foods and beverages that help achieve and maintain a healthy weight, promote health, and prevent disease.



**ACTION [E-1a]: Provide a variety of opportunities to learn about nutrition guidelines, including:**

- conducting healthy cooking/nutrition classes,
- providing nutrition information through nutritionists at the gym
- holding Nutrition Fairs,
- providing education about preventable diseases that can be impacted by improved nutrition.

**ACTION [E-1b]: Educate about how to read recipes and nutrition labels to understand which foods support healthy eating.**

**ACTION [E-1c]: Provide childcare for families during healthy eating education opportunities.**

**Strategy E-2: Provide Consistent Healthy Eating Messaging and Education Throughout the Community**

**ACTION [E-2a]: Develop a program of Healthy West Chicago Ambassadors to educate about healthy eating choices.**

- Incorporate Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children (clocc) 5-4-3-2-1 Go! public education messages containing recommendations for children and families to promote a healthy lifestyle.

**ACTION [E-2b]: Incorporate the YMCA's Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) Standards into marketing strategies and training targeting all institutions that provide child-care or after school care services.**

**ACTION [E-2c]: Pursue the implementation of the YMCA USA Diabetes Prevention Program that targets adults over the age of 18 who are overweight and at risk for type 2 diabetes.**

**ACTION [E-2d]: Provide healthy recipes and cooking demonstrations.**

**ACTION [E-2e]: Provide classes on canning foods and healthy cooking demonstrations at the farmers market.**

**ACTION [E-2f]: Implement programs and hold events to educate about healthy eating and provide consistent messaging throughout the community.**



- select a Healthy West Chicago healthy ingredient of the month to highlight throughout the community (schools, library, City, Park District, grocery stores, and more.)

### **Strategy E-3: Encourage Healthy Eating Options at Community Events**

**ACTION [E-3a]:** Host health and wellness events as part of larger community events and festivals.

**ACTION [E-3b]:** Improve nutrition of foods offered at community events.

## **OBJECTIVE F. Regulate food and beverage marketing**

Increase the chances that people will adopt healthier behaviors that will last a lifetime by eliminating the marketing of junk foods to children while encouraging healthy food consumption.

### **THE ISSUES AND RESEARCH**

Food and beverage marketing intentionally targets children who are too young to tell advertising from the truth—and most encourages them to eat low-nutrient, energy-dense junk foods.<sup>58</sup> According to the Institute of Medicine, food and beverage marketing practices geared to children and youth are out of balance with healthful diets and contribute to an environment that puts their health at risk.<sup>59</sup> Coupled with the increased availability of competitive foods in U.S. schools, increased food and beverage marketing to children can have detrimental effects on children's food choices.

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### **Strategy F-1: Regulate the Marketing of Unhealthy Food and Beverages**

**ACTION [F-1a]:** Adopt vending machine policies that prohibit the marketing and sale of unhealthy foods and beverages in youth centers, school facilities, and parks department facilities, as well as other facilities owned or operated by state and local governments.

**ACTION [F-1b]:** Prohibit all advertisements and promotions on campus, ban all food and beverage advertisements and promotions on campus, or forbid the marketing of products that are not permitted to be sold on campus.

**ACTION [F-1c]:** Decline offers from food and beverage marketers to sponsor before- and after-school programs, and turn down donations (e.g., a new scoreboard with a beverage company logo on it or new uniforms for sports teams with food and beverage logos.)

**ACTION [F-1d]:** Limit or restrict vending machine covers, book covers and other "giveaways," etc., from food and beverage companies.

**Strategy F-2: Implement the Rethink Your Drink Campaign**

**ACTION [F-2a]:** Encourage schools, businesses, public buildings and organizations to post informational materials about the Rethink Your Drink campaign near all beverage vending machines.

**ACTION [F-2b]:** Encourage schools, businesses and organizations to take the Rethink Your Drink pledge to drink more water and fewer sugar-loaded beverages.

**ACTION [F-2c]:** Encourage schools, faith based organizations, and community events to use the Rethink Your Drink campaign materials to teach about healthy beverage choices.

**ACTION [F-2d]:** Require access to free and safe drinking water in public places.



## C. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES



*The ARC Center*

Healthy West Chicago is working to bring together school administrators, park district officials, public health professionals, urban planners, transportation engineers, community residents and others to create a place where access to physical activity is easy and affordable and it is easy to add activity to everyday life. An active community is a community with:

- many types of opportunities for recreation
- residents who regularly use biking, walking and transit for transportation
- vibrant local businesses patronized by local residents

Healthy West Chicago will work in collaboration with our partners to shape local policies and improve the built environment and systems so that opportunities for physical activity are accessible and affordable to everyone living and working in the City of West Chicago.

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### OBJECTIVE A. Increase the Availability of Opportunities for Physical Activity that are Affordable and Accessible Throughout the Community

#### Strategy A-1: Ensure That Every Child in West Chicago Receives 60 Minutes of Physical Activity Each Day

**ACTION [A-1a]:** Implement training on new physical education strategies that actively engage all children in physical activity.

**ACTION [A-1b]:** Incorporate the YMCA's Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) and State standards into marketing strategies and training targeting all institutions that provide childcare or after school care services.

**ACTION [A-1c]:** Review Change Lab Solutions model policies for increasing healthy eating and physical activity and develop plans for pursuing specific policies on a community-wide and institutional level (Change Lab Solutions provides model policies and technical assistance related to healthy planning and public health issues.)

#### Strategy A-2: Build, Maintain, and Increase Access to Parks, Athletic Facilities, and Recreation Areas

**ACTION [A-2a]:** Continue to offer extended hours at The ARC Center later in the evening to meet the needs of youth (teens) and working adults.

**ACTION [A-2b]:** Provide indoor recreation space targeting specific age groups on specific days/times.

**ACTION [A-2c]:** Identify and communicate opportunities for physical activity in the community.

**ACTION [A-2d]:** Provide childcare for caregivers wanting to do physical activity.

**ACTION [A-2e]:** Develop additional recreational sports opportunities for adults and children.

**Strategy A-3:** Increase Community Access to Gyms, Ball Fields, and Other Recreation Areas at Schools, Non-Profits, and Businesses or Corporate Campuses, Through Joint-Use Agreements

**ACTION [A-3a]:** Develop cooperative agreements both within West Chicago and with neighboring communities to provide for additional physical activity opportunities.

**ACTION [A-3b]:** Market physical activity opportunities aggressively to low income Latino residents.

**Strategy A-4:** Provide Low- or No-Cost Physical Activity Programs, Facilities, or Equipment (e.g. Bicycles) for Children, Families, and Adults of All Ages

**ACTION [A-4a]:** Provide Healthy West Chicago opportunities for physical activity free of charge.

**ACTION [A-4b]:** Develop and track a Healthy West Chicago Passport Program that provides stamps for achievements (eg, walking miles on city trails).

**ACTION [A-4c]:** Create a system of city trails with signage and mile markers. Provide residents with a map of trails and mileage.

**ACTION [A-4d]:** Make West Chicago a bikeable and walkable community. See Active Transportation Section (Physical Activity Objective B) of this Action Plan.

**ACTION [A-4e]:** Evaluate and communicate about pricing of Park District and other fitness activities and membership.



## THE ISSUES AND RESEARCH

Evidence shows that providing safe sidewalks, bike trails, and traffic calming devices can lead to increased physical activity.<sup>60</sup>

To increase physical activity opportunities in neighborhoods and combat some of the safety issues, many communities have adopted approaches ranging from Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs to complete streets policies, with positive results. An analysis of 33 studies demonstrated that children in neighborhoods with sidewalks and controlled intersections were more physically active than children in neighborhoods with road hazards and unsafe intersections.<sup>61</sup> Another study found that adding and improving bicycle lanes, traffic signals, sidewalks and crosswalks increased the number of children walking or bicycling to school. Students were three times more likely to start walking or bicycling on routes that included improvements than they were before these improvements were made.<sup>62</sup>

**Leadership for Healthy  
Communities: Action  
Strategies Toolkit**

## OBJECTIVE B. Develop Safe Roads and Paths for Bicyclists and Pedestrians

Make bicycling and walking easy and provide safe transportation options by creating a built environment that supports safe, active transportation.

### **Strategy B-1: Develop a Master Plan That Assesses the Environment for Pedestrians and Bicyclists, and Makes Infrastructure Improvements that Enhance Safety, Bikeability and Walkability**

- Active transportation plans, complete streets: Develop or re-evaluate long-term transportation plans that explicitly set "active transportation" goals for walking or biking as modes of transportation. Implement complete streets in neighborhoods. The following list includes some complete streets measures that improve safe walking and biking options in communities:

**ACTION [B-1a]: Conduct an active transportation health impact assessment.**

**ACTION [B-1b]: Develop a comprehensive plan and a bicycle master plan to identify ways to expand trails and connections. Integrate the connection of paths, sidewalks, trails, services and facilities into broader transportation planning.**

**ACTION [B-1c]: Partner with local entities to ensure that organizational comprehensive plans incorporate physical activity opportunities.**

**ACTION [B-1d]: Promote adoption of complete streets policy.**

### **Strategy B-2: Implement Built Environment and Infrastructure Changes to Support Biking and Walking**

**ACTION [B-2a]: Support policies and funding that build trails through neighborhoods to connect homes with schools, which would allow children to ride a bicycle or walk to school without having to cross busy, unsafe streets.**

- Consider policies that ensure sidewalk continuity and direct routes for pedestrians and bicyclists, including connections between dead-end streets and cul-de-sac.
- Trails and sidewalks should connect to a variety of town resources, such as schools, grocery stores, libraries and other facilities.

**ACTION [B-2b]: Increase bike racks and shelters near public transit and in other key community locations.**

**ACTION [B-2c]: Establish separate traffic lanes for bicyclists and sidewalks for pedestrians.**

**ACTION [B-2d]: Promote moderate traffic speeds, especially on local residential and commercial streets, by designing narrower streets, sidewalk curbs, raised and clearly painted crosswalks, raised medians, wide sidewalks and streetscaping, which can include adding trees, hedges and planter strips.**

**ACTION [B-2e]: Employ other critical safety measures including appropriately timed lights, pedestrian signals, crossing guards near schools and sufficient street lighting at night.**

### **Strategy B-3: Implement Walk to School and Safe Routes to School Programs**

Build upon and expand existing Safe Routes to School programming, and incorporate parent surveys, route development, and the development and implementation of recommendations to make routes to and from school easier and safer for children to traverse.

**ACTION [B-3a]: Collaborate with community partners, such as city planners and health officials, to identify streets or improve multi-use pathways that would result in increased bicyclist and pedestrian use.**

**ACTION [B-3b]: Conduct a walkability audit to identify places for improvement and assess the degree to which their community enables active living.**

**ACTION [B-3c]: Use Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping to determine safe routes to school or improvements to sidewalks, bicycle lanes, trails and street connectivity.**

**ACTION [B-3d]: Begin developing Safe Routes to School programs by working with parent organizations, students, school administrators and teachers, local law enforcement, city planners, health officials and other stakeholders to identify barriers that make it difficult for students to travel to school safely.**

**ACTION [B-3e]: Develop and implement engineering strategies to create safer environments for walking and bicycling to school through improvements to the infrastructure surrounding schools.**



- Focus improvements on reducing motor vehicle speeds and conflicts with pedestrians and bicyclists, and establishing safer and fully accessible crossings, walkways, trails and bikeways.

**ACTION [B-3f]: Develop and implement education programs targeting children, parents, caregivers and neighbors, teaching how to walk and bicycle safely and informing drivers on how to drive more safely around pedestrians and bicyclists.**

- Education programs can also incorporate health and environment messages.

**ACTION [B-3g]: Implement enforcement strategies to increase the safety of children bicycling and walking to school by helping to change unsafe behaviors of drivers, as well as pedestrians and bicyclists.**

- A community approach to enforcement involves students, parents or caregivers, school personnel, crossing guards and law enforcement officers.

**ACTION [B-3h]: Encourage activities that promote walking and bicycling to school by children, parents and community members.**

- Events such as Walk to School Day, contests such as a Frequent Walker/Bicyclist challenge, or on-going programs such as a Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train can promote and encourage walking and bicycling as a popular way to get to school.

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## **OBJECTIVE C. Improve the use of public space for physical activity**

Increase opportunities for physical activity, help reduce pollution and improve economic development by providing green space and walkable, mixed-use development.

### **Strategy C-1: Re-Evaluate Urban Design and Comprehensive Land-Use Plans to Improve Active Living**

**ACTION [C-1a]: Assess the connection between public transit stations, sidewalks and bicycle routes to inform plans that will encourage public transit, walking and biking.**

**ACTION [C-1b]: Work with planners to foster walkable, safe communities by locating businesses, recreation centers, parks, libraries and other facilities near public transportation and major roads.**