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# Plan4Health Success Story: Baltimore Greenway Trails Coalition



*Plan4Health connects communities across the country, funding work at the intersection of planning and public health. Anchored by American Planning Association (APA) chapters and American Public Health Association (APHA) affiliates, Plan4Health supports creative partnerships to build sustainable, cross-sector coalitions.*

One of these coalitions, the [Baltimore Greenway Trails Coalition \(http://plan4health.us/plan4health-coalitions/baltimore-md-baltimore-greenway-trails-coalition/\)](http://plan4health.us/plan4health-coalitions/baltimore-md-baltimore-greenway-trails-coalition/), seeks to address health equity and safety in transportation infrastructure through building an urban trail network that connects existing trails to disconnected neighborhoods, parks, anchor institutions, and to the downtown core.

Baltimore lacks active transportation infrastructure, with a fragmented built environment. Opportunities for physical activity, resident mobility, and connectivity are inhibited by a combination of factors, including deindustrialization, auto-centric planning, and single-use codes.



Coalition leader Jim Brown discusses the Baltimore trail system at the Druid Hill Farmers' Market. Photo courtesy Baltimore Greenway Trails Coalition.

Resident mobility and connectivity is further hindered by a lack of public transportation options and the more than 30 percent of residents who lack access to a car. Nearly 30 percent of residents also reported no physical activity. These low rates of physical activity are accompanied by high rates of chronic disease, including obesity (31 percent), Type 2 diabetes (12.4 percent), and heart disease (26 percent).

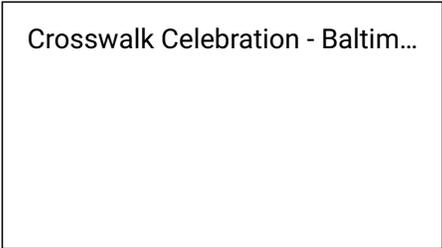
Additionally, the unemployment rate is 13.9 percent, more than double the rate for Maryland as a whole. The ability to reach a place of employment was identified by residents as the biggest barrier to staying employed.

The [Baltimore Greenway Trails Coalition](https://www.railstotrails.org/our-work/projects/baltimore-greenway-trails-coalition/how-we-re-getting-it-done/) (<https://www.railstotrails.org/our-work/projects/baltimore-greenway-trails-coalition/how-we-re-getting-it-done/>) addresses issues in the built environment and creates a more robust trail network to increase and sustain connectivity and opportunities for physical activity.

The coalition works with new and established partners to identify opportunities and barriers through community outreach and engagement, create and implement demonstration projects to showcase active living opportunities, and ensure that active living is incorporated into neighborhood plans. This project will help to inform and establish best practices and will be shared with other regional trail networks.

In Fall 2016 the Baltimore Greenways Trail Coalition conducted extensive community engagement at the Druid Hill Farmers Market along the Jones Falls Trail, working with neighborhood partners in the Greater Mondawmin Community. At the market, coalition members talked with residents about trails and safe streets as part of a healthy city.

The coalition captured data from area residents while they explored the Plan4Health project map and shared their thoughts on walking, biking and what makes a healthy community. As part of this outreach, the coalition hired a local artist to install a pop-up mural crosswalk across a busy intersection which serves to better connect residents to the park, the trail, and the farmers market:



This temporary intervention speaks to the need for permanent improvements in pedestrian and bike infrastructure which the coalition is working on.

"Not everyone understands what a bike lane is, but nearly everyone can imagine riding a bike on a trail," said Liz Cornish, the executive director of Bikemore. "The coalition has given us a mechanism to engage diverse residents from across the city in conversations about livable streets and healthy communities."

Residents of Baltimore can learn more about the coalition and ways to get involved by visiting the coalition's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/BaltimoreGreenwayTrailsCoalition](http://www.facebook.com/BaltimoreGreenwayTrailsCoalition) (<https://www.facebook.com/BaltimoreGreenwayTrailsCoalition>)). This page includes information on upcoming events and planning activities as well as information from advocates and partners. More information is also available here: [www.railstotrails.org/our-work/projects/baltimore-greenway-trails-coalition/](http://www.railstotrails.org/our-work/projects/baltimore-greenway-trails-coalition/) (<https://www.railstotrails.org/our-work/projects/baltimore-greenway-trails-coalition/>).

To learn more about the Baltimore Greenway Trails Coalition and all coalitions participating in Plan4Health, check out the project website ([www.plan4health.us](http://www.plan4health.us) (<http://plan4health.us/>)). Join the national conversation at the intersection of planning and public health on social media by using and following #plan4health.

*Success story developed by Jim Brown, manager of trail development, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.*

**Top image:** *The Baltimore Greenway Trails Coalition engaged residents to share ideas about healthy community design. Photo courtesy Baltimore Greenway Trails Coalition.*

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JUNE 27, 2017

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