



Community

Healthy Environment Policy Initiative Columbia

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The goal of Columbia's Healthy Environment Policy Initiative (HEPI) is to develop and implement system-level strategies that support healthy eating and active living, especially for **children at highest risk of obesity** – namely, low-income and minority children and families. Since families fitting this demographic description do not all live in one contiguous area, HEPI will define a **target population**, rather than a target community with geographic boundaries.

Definition of Target Population

The target population for this project lives in several parts of Columbia. It will be defined in two different ways, and two different communication channels will be used to engage this population.

1. Urban Empowerment Ministries, a faith-based community organization and HEPI partner, has identified five underserved neighborhoods within which to carry out its mission "to empower people to impact a community."
2. Columbia Public Schools, also a HEPI partner, offers free or reduced-price lunch to low-income children. In seven of its nineteen elementary schools, more than 50% of children qualify for this designation.

As illustrated, most of the target schools are located within or close to target neighborhoods. The First Ward, the largest of the neighborhoods and containing four of the schools, is taken as typical of the entire target population.

Community Needs Assessment

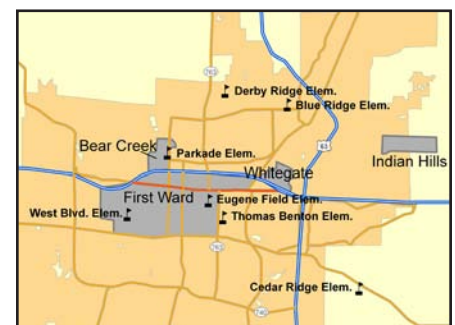
Affordable healthy food
Sidewalks and safe places
to play
Improved public transport
system

Neighborhoods:

- First Ward
- Bear Creek
- Indian Hills
- Whitegate
- Chris Drive

Schools:

- West Boulevard
- Eugene Field
- Thomas Benton
- Blue Ridge
- Cedar Ridge
- Derby Ridge
- Parkade



Demographics of the First Ward

- Area Type: Urban
- Location: Immediately west and north of Downtown
- Racial composition:
 - Black: 57%
 - White: 35%
 - Hispanic: 3%
 - Asian: 3%
- Population: Approx. 10,000
- Median household income: \$17,168
- Head of household:
 - Single female: 60%
- Representation: One seat (Paul Sturtz) on Columbia City Council

Assets

- Resourcefulness and pride
- Frederick Douglass High School
- Frederick Douglass Coalition
- Columbia Housing Authority
- Urban Empowerment Ministries

Challenges

- Low education
- Low employment
- High crime/drug use
- Low engagement in local politics
- High chronic disease rates

Community Needs

Affordable healthy food

Most food outlets available to the target population are fast food restaurants and convenience stores. Residents must travel outside the neighborhood to find grocery stores with fresh produce. Although there is a twice-weekly farmers' market close to the First Ward, the prices are beyond the means of the target population.



Sidewalks and safe places to play

Although neighborhood parks are available to the target population, they are not always accessible. Most residential streets were built without sidewalks and some are used by high-speed cut-through traffic. Street lighting is poor, there is high crime and drug use, and there is a strong perception that children are at risk of being "snatched."



Improved public transport system

The City of Columbia runs an affordable (50c per ride with free transfers) bus system that serves low-income neighborhoods. However, the service is infrequent (every 40 minutes or 80 minutes at different times of day), with reduced Saturday service, no Sunday service, and no service after 6pm, Monday-Wednesday.



Portrait of Columbia, MO

Located in mid-Missouri



Compact, walkable downtown



University of Missouri



Urban walking/biking trails



Farmers' market

Walking School Bus program



Underserved neighborhoods

