



# Policy Approach

## Healthy Environment Policy Initiative Columbia

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Changes in organizational and **public policies** modify the environment within which people live their lives and can create lasting behavior change. The goal of this project is to enact policies that make **healthy behaviors**, such as walking to the store and eating fresh vegetables, the “natural” ones. The HEPI Partnership has policy “champions” and a proven record in **media advocacy**.

### Three Types of Policy Change

**Organizational Policy Changes** impact children directly in childcare and school-related settings by creating a healthy food and activity environment.

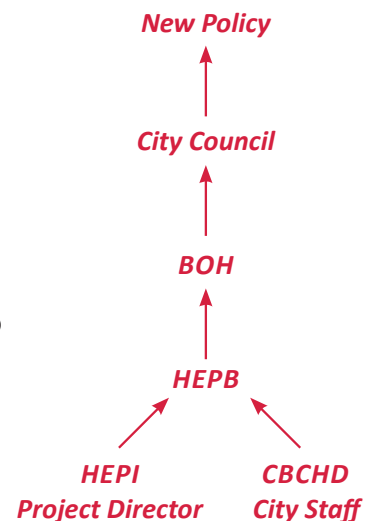
**Local Government Policy Changes** impact citizens in their daily lives by removing barriers to healthy foods and routine physical activity in the community.

**Regulatory Policy Changes** impact food production and distribution by making local, healthy foods more available, affordable, and accessible

### Healthy Environment Policy Board (HEPB)

To provide policy leverage, the Partnership will seek to establish the Healthy Environment Policy Board (HEPB). In one model that’s being considered, HEPB will:

- Be established by City ordinance as a subcommittee of the existing Columbia Board of Health (BOH).
- Consist of local health policy experts (including Partnership members) appointed by the City Council.
- Be staffed by Columbia/Boone County Health Department (CBCHD) and the HEPI Project Director.
- Study food policy and activity/ transportation policy proposals designed to create a healthy environment.
- Have authority and credibility in making specific policy recommendations to City Council via BOH.
- Serve as the center of HEPI project activity, also making recommendations to other policymaking authorities



### Goals of Policy Change

- More walking/biking to school
- Healthy food in early childhood education
- Access to public recreation center
- Improved mass transit
- Community gardens
- Stronger local food economy

## Organizational Policy Changes

**Example: Create long-term district-wide policy goals to increase percentages of children walking/biking to school**

- Target Jurisdiction: Columbia Public Schools (CPS) Board of Education
- Partnership Champion: Jack Jensen, Asst. Superintendent, CPS
- Discussion: Current policies and practices discourage kids from walking or biking to school. Setting long-term policy goals would promote ideas such as releasing walkers before car-riders, making school drop-off systems safer, and selecting new school sites that minimize student travel distances.



**Example: Make a local exemption for food "quality" standards in Head Start programs**

- Target Jurisdiction: Central Missouri Community Action (CMCA) Board of Directors
- Partnership Champion: Darin Preis, Executive Director, CMCA
- Discussion: Current USDA Child and Adult Care Food program (CACFP) guidelines on the source of reimbursable foods exclude local growers. CMCA will apply for an exemption to use local produce at its 17 Head Start agencies, and will develop new food policies based on the results of research.



## Local Government Policy Changes

**Example: Make scholarship structures and cultural environment at the ARC more accessible and inclusive**

- Target Jurisdiction: Columbia City Council
- Partnership Champion: Mayor Darwin Hindman
- Discussion: The city-owned Activity and Recreation Center (ARC) is located in the First Ward and offers scholarships for low-income families, but the application process is complex and the ARC's cultural environment is not inclusive. New policies would simplify and expand the scholarship system and make the ARC more diverse.

**Example: Create partnership whereby University funds City bus system improvements and students travel free**

- Target Jurisdiction: Columbia City Council, University of Missouri curators
- Partnership Champions: Mayor Darwin Hindman and Lisa Schwartz, MU Foundation Relations
- Discussion: Good public transport systems promote walking and biking, and help low-income residents access grocery stores. Modeled after partnerships in other college towns, the policy goals would be to increase bus routes and frequency of service, so public transport becomes a better option for everyone.



**Example: Waive property taxes and provide free water for undeveloped lots that are made available for community gardens**

- Target Jurisdiction: City of Columbia Council and Boone County Commission
- Partnership Champion: Mayor Darwin Hindman
- Discussion: To encourage property owners to allow their land to be used as community gardens, Boone County property taxes and City of Columbia water charges would be waived. The City would partner with the MU Extension and the Community Garden Coalition to provide education programs, seeds, and tools.



## Regulatory Policy Changes

**Policy Area: Make fresh, local, and healthy food available and affordable in Columbia neighborhoods:**

- Establish grant and loan programs to attract retail grocery stores and community farmers' markets into low-income neighborhoods.
- Use incentives, such as tax credits, for private and public institutions to purchase local, healthy foods.

**Policy Area: Promote healthy foods and beverages in stores, restaurants, and entertainment venues:**

- Require healthier food and beverage items to be placed at eye level and increase overall shelf space devoted to healthy items.
- Reduce point-of-sale marketing of energy dense, nutrient-poor foods and beverages to children.
- Require fast-food and chain restaurants to list nutrient information on menus.

