



PARK HILL THRIVING COMMUNITIES: Year Four Annual Report to the Community

The Park Hill Thriving Communities Project has been operating in Park Hill neighborhoods for the past four years, working toward eliminating health disparities among residents by providing greater access to healthy eating and more opportunities for active living. The project has been a great success this year, with the Bike Depot on 28th and Fairfax establishing itself as an independent nonprofit organization in February 2009, renovations beginning in Axum Park with the building of a

walking path this past October, and a multiple-year grant being awarded from the Colorado Health Foundation to improve access to healthy foods by reducing barriers to grocery store development within Denver's underserved communities. Congratulations to all residents and partners who have made this project successful in realizing measurable results and securing additional funding to keep the project momentum moving!

TIMELINE Of '09 Events

- ### February 2009
- Denver Post article published outlining Sunflower Market's interest in opening a store in Park Hill.
 - Bike Depot established as a non-profit organization.
 - Community meetings held for final Axum Park renovation designs.

- ### March 2009
- The Food Trust of Philadelphia provided guidance to Park Hill residents, city leaders and interested organizational partners on building access to healthy food by stimulating grocery store development in underserved neighborhoods.

- ### May 2009
- The Bike Depot celebrated its first year anniversary with a community party and the first family bike ride with the Greater Park Hill Family Bike Committee.
 - Gifts of Rhythm & Dance African dance classes completed.

- ### July 2009
- Submitted a proposal to the Colorado Health Foundation to establish city-wide policies that encourage grocery store development in needed communities.
 - Conducted health impact assessment of the Westerly Creek drainage to advocate for redesign into a walking/biking path.
 - Bike Depot swamped on open days!

- ### September 2009
- Conducted the Denver Supermarket Summit for retailers to discuss healthy food retail for Park Hill and other Denver communities.

- ### October 2009
- Conducted first phase of Axum Park renovations with the construction of a perimeter walking path.

- ### December 2009
- Colorado Health Foundation food access proposal funded.
 - Park Hill school wellness mini-grants announced.

2009 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2009 was a very successful year for the project, continuing to expand upon activities of the previous year.

Programs

Della Westerfield of Gifts of Rhythm & Dance continued to offer African dance classes for the community through May 2009. **One hundred residents** attended the very popular classes up through this time.

The Bike Depot became a non-profit organization and continued to offer bike safety classes and instructional "bike rodeo" events for kids.

Policy

GOAL: Increase access to healthy food retail

- Supported Park Hill community advocacy efforts to secure a grocery store near 40th and Colorado. Provided information and research, GIS maps, and attended a meeting with Sunflower Market, City Council, and the Mayor's Task Force on Zoning to encourage Sunflower to open a store in Park Hill.
- Aligned with The Food Trust, a Philadelphia based non-profit organization, and the Colorado Health Foundation to engage city-wide partners in addressing the lack of grocery venues in Park Hill and other Denver area "food deserts."
- Convened the September "Denver Supermarket Summit" with the Colorado Health Foundation to engage food retailers in a dialogue with the Food Trust about establishing healthy food retail in underserved communities around Denver.
- Awarded a three-year grant by the Colorado Health Foundation to conduct the first pilot initiative in Denver to address access to healthy food issues.



GOAL: Increase opportunities for active living

- Implemented a "Safe Routes to School" national data collection project with a grant secured from the Colorado Department of Transportation. Collected data at Phillips, Stedman and Smith Elementary Schools in Park Hill. Students conducted a photo voice project, taking pictures of unsafe conditions around the schools which impact walking or bicycling safely to school.
- Conducted a health impact assessment on the proposed re-development of the Westerly Creek drainage into a bike/walking path. Councilwoman Marcia Johnson will use the assessment to advocate for re-development. The effort supports the creation of a safe biking connection to regional bike trails throughout Denver and beyond.
- Participated in the Mayor's Bicycle Advisory Commission. A Bike Depot Policy Committee member was appointed by the Mayor to attend meetings, ensure alignment with project strategies and priorities, and to address issues related to bikeability of streets (e.g., creating bike lanes, or "sharrows"). Public Works has finalized plans for a dedicated bike lane along Martin Luther King.

Environment

- Organized two community stakeholder meetings with Parks and Recreation in early 2009 to finalize Axum Park redesign plans (see Story Feature for more detail).
- Conducted an observation assessment of Axum Park use prior to construction of the first renovation, a perimeter path around the park. Results indicated a low use of the park in relation to its potential. Community outreach in the neighborhoods surrounding the park showed that residents are very interested in using the new park, including walking on the path, bringing children to the playground and holding family picnics.
- Organized an effort with Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado to build a perimeter walking path around Axum Park. 130 volunteers completed the task. Councilwoman Carla Madison dedicated the trail and led a community celebration complete with speeches, food and entertainment.
- Improved community perceptions about neighborhood safety as evidenced by the large numbers of patrons using the Bike Depot.



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Park Hill Thriving Communities is pleased to present its fourth annual report to the community which tells the story about how work continues toward achieving our mission to eliminate health disparities in Park Hill through equal access to healthy eating and equal opportunities to active living.

Story Feature: Axum Park Renovations

Planning and design

Early in 2009 PHTC and Parks and Recreation held two community Stakeholder meetings to finalize park redesign plans, which included a state-of-the-art playground (with climbing features and a rolling hill), covered picnic pavilions with grills, a new basketball court, paved access through the park, a multi-use perimeter trail, chess/games tables, a painted mural, and other features to make the park more useable. City staff and community members alike were pleased with the design plans which incorporated Ethiopian cultural aspects such as a tile-patterned design of the walkway and sculptures representing ancient Ethiopian ruins.

Auditing park use

In September an observation audit of the park was conducted to assess current park use before renovations of the park began. Results showed:

- Low use of the park, with a few people walking or jogging through the park in the mornings
- A few people either sitting on the park benches or playing on the grass.
- Weekday mornings and Sunday afternoons the busiest.
- Some residents expressed concerns about park safety.



the park's perimeter. PHTC staff publicized the event ahead of time by canvassing the Park Hill neighborhood with information about the trail-build and encouraging residents to use the new park once all renovations are completed in the Fall of 2010. Residents were pleased and positive about the plans, and interested in using the renovated park.

The trail-build was very successful with **130 volunteers** and project partners in attendance at a rescheduled event on the evening of October 9th. A large winter storm scheduled to hit on October 10th necessitated the change in event schedule. In addition to the path, artists painted new murals on the outside wall of the restroom facility. The renovations were celebrated on October 10th, a very cold Saturday morning, including speeches by project partners, an initiation walk around the new path, entertainment and a community picnic.



Breaking ground

Park renovations began on October 9, 2009 with the construction of a walking trail/path around



Story Feature: The Bike Depot

Shifting into high gear

After two years of planning, the Park Hill Bike Depot opened its doors for business on April 19, 2008. A collaborative community effort, partners and residents alike invested time, sweat and materials to make the Depot a reality. **Over \$60,000 of in-kind time and materials were contributed to the project.** The new community resource, located in the business district of Park Hill, not only improved the Park Hill environment but also access to active living resources for all residents.

The Bike Depot continued and expanded its operations in 2009. It offers bike maintenance and repair services, bike safety classes and an earn-a-bike community service program. Two part-time staff run its day-to-day operations, and it has a volunteer base of **150 volunteers**. Bike maintenance services and the earn-a-bike program saw the greatest growth in 2009. An average of **50 bikes were fixed each week**, meaning **2,600 bikes were put back on the road** last year, and **224 patrons** participated in the requisite two-hour bike safety education class to earn a bike. Altogether, **364 bikes were distributed**. The Depot also partnered with the Greater Park Hill Community Association Bike Ride Committee to expand the monthly family bike rides around the Park Hill neighborhood.

Focus on organizational development

With a mission for comprehensive, community-based development of biking in Park Hill, and the broad scope of actions needed to fulfill this mission,

The beginnings of an established organizational system were created with its established non-profit status, paid staff and committed board leadership. A strong cadre of volunteers has been recruited, a for-profit retail sales and repair funding stream has begun as well as an established bike donation stream, and funds from grants and donations have been coming in to support development. The Depot looks forward to its next productive year providing services to the community and advocating for the further development of Park Hill and citywide bike policies.

organizational development was a critical focus in 2009 in order to provide an effective structure for action. The Depot became an independent, non-profit organization in February 2009, with a full Board and officers and six committees. PHTC staff worked closely with Depot staff and board members to develop the organization, sharing information and resources, and providing technical assistance in organizational development, operations and evaluation. The Depot built its revenue-generating capacity throughout the year, targeting for-profit and nonprofit sources to build its long-term sustainability.

Assessing future directions

"Nonprofit Impact," a local Denver-based organization, conducted an organizational assessment of the Depot to guide its continued growth as a thriving nonprofit. A report and recommendations were provided to guide improvement of the Depot's organizational systems and to clarify future actions for long-term success.



Citywide Impacts

Park Hill Thriving Communities has taken its experience to other Denver communities, building success at the neighborhood level into city-wide initiatives.

- Advised the Denver Housing Authority on plans to redevelop the Lincoln Park low-income housing complex south of the downtown. Provided support in the development of a health impact assessment to be used in directing redevelopment efforts at the site. PHTC staff will continue to collaborate with the Planning Department, City Council, the State Health Department, and other partners for the use of health impact assessment in city planning and redevelopment projects in general.
- Implemented a grant from the Colorado Department of Transportation to collect national "Safe Routes to School" data and to implement tailored programming for six Denver elementary schools, including three in Park Hill.
- Supported the work of the Denver Living Streets Initiative.
- Supported the continued planning of the "West Denver Community Action for a Renewed Environment Coalition" by helping to facilitate coalition development and planning efforts for addressing environmental concerns.
- Created an alliance with The Food Trust and the Colorado Health Foundation to engage both Park Hill and city-wide partners in addressing the lack of grocery venues not only in Park Hill but in other Denver food desert areas that have limited resident access to healthy retail food stores.

FUNDING

While LiveWell Colorado provided \$250,000 for year four, additional funds totaling over \$96,000 were leveraged in actual dollar amount and another \$468,936 in the dollar equivalent for in-kind support via relationships with partners. Years two and three included city bond funding leveraged for the improvements at Axum Park.



Comparison of Grant & Leveraged Funds

