



City and County of Denver
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Denver Announces the “Food in Communities” Initiative

Denver, Adams, and Jefferson Counties collaborate to increase access to healthy foods in neighborhoods

The Denver Department of Public Health & Environment (DDPHE) announced today the start of a 3-year community-based initiative called “Food in Communities.” This initiative will support [Denver’s Food Action Plan](#), local Public Health Improvement Plans, as well as other food systems and food policy work in Denver, Adams, and Jefferson Counties. The purpose is to expand equitable access to healthy, affordable, and culturally relevant food in neighborhoods across the region.

Over the last decade, community members and organizations around Metro Denver have sought solutions to the issues of food justice, healthy food access, and food insecurity. To address these critically important and complex topics, three local public health agencies – the Denver Department of Public Health & Environment (DDPHE), Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) and Jefferson County Public Health (JCPH)– received funding from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment’s Cancer, Cardiovascular Pulmonary Disease (CCPD) Grant Program. The goal of the grant is to create “complete neighborhood food environments” through programs and policies that address food access and food insecurity. A complete neighborhood food environment is a community-defined set of food resources (e.g., grocery stores, farmers’ markets, school gardens, etc.) that can provide for the food needs of all community members.

“Communities are at the heart of our work with food systems across Denver and the region,” said Bob McDonald, Executive Director of DDPHE and the Public Health Administrator for the city of Denver. “We’re prioritizing our residents and businesses as together we explore innovative ways and new opportunities to address food access, food insecurity, and food equity in our neighborhoods.”

The food programs and policies in the initiative will be driven by community members and will focus on supporting communities with limited resources, families with children, seniors, and communities of color. By improving the neighborhood context in which people live, work, learn and play, people will have more opportunities to eat nutritious food, be free from hunger, and experience positive health outcomes.

As the second project from DDPHE’s Food Action Plan to realize the goals set forth in the [Denver Food Vision](#), the Food in Communities project charts a path to achieve this bold vision for all Denver metro area communities to have access to fresh, healthy, affordable, and culturally-relevant foods. We will continue to roll out projects as part of this plan over the next two years.

“Addressing food insecurity is a top priority in Jefferson County, where more than one in ten residents are food insecure,” said Dr. Mark B. Johnson, Executive Director of Jefferson County Public Health. “It is an issue that crosses county borders, and we look forward to collaborating as a region and with our communities to tackle it.”

“Community members and local partners recently prioritized food access and food insecurity as a focus area in our Public Health Improvement Plan over the next six years,” stated Dr. John Douglas, Jr., MD and Executive Director of Tri-County Health Department. “The Food in Communities grant supports our goals and objectives to ensure that our communities have access to healthy foods and decrease food insecurity through the built environment, federal nutrition programs and partnerships such as Farmers’ Markets.”

This collaborative effort includes working closely with community residents and organizations to define food access gaps in their neighborhoods and propose local resident-driven solutions across the region. These collaborative strategies will include:

- Working in partnership with community members to identify assets and needs related to food in their communities
- Collaborating with new or existing neighborhood groups to design and test food access, food justice, or food business pilot projects
- Supporting local food policy councils or coalitions to advocate for food policies that support community food needs and priorities
- Addressing food policy or food access from a regional perspective with the goal of working across the political boundaries of individual cities and counties

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The Denver Department of Public Health & Environment (DDPHE), Denver’s nationally-accredited public health agency, empowers Denver’s communities to live better, longer. The divisions of DDPHE are: Animal Protection, Community Health, Environmental Quality, Office of Sustainability, Office of the Medical Examiner and Public Health Inspections. In partnership with Denver Public Health, DDPHE provides quality public health services to the City and County of Denver. For more information about DDPHE, visit denvergov.org/dphe or follow us at [@DDPHE](https://twitter.com/DDPHE).

Tri-County Health Department serves over 1.5 million people in Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties. It provides over 60 programs and services including birth certificates, immunizations, food/WIC, restaurant inspections, family planning, STI/HIV Testing and infectious disease investigations. For more information, visit www.tchd.org Twitter @TCHDHealth or Facebook @cotchd.

Public health is what we as a society do collectively to prevent illness and premature death and promote health in our neighborhoods and communities. Jefferson County Public Health (JCPH) is committed to promoting and protecting health across the lifespan through prevention, education and partnerships for all people. To learn more about JCPH, visit <https://www.jeffco.us/public-health>. You can also follow JCPH on Twitter [@JeffcoPH](https://twitter.com/JeffcoPH), Instagram [@JeffcoPH](https://www.instagram.com/JeffcoPH) and Facebook [@jeffcopublichealth](https://www.facebook.com/jeffcopublichealth).

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