

Building Healthy Communities



Niagara Falls is home to one of the most spectacular waterfalls of the world. Alongside this magnet for international and domestic tourism, the Highland Avenue and Hyde Park neighborhoods of Niagara Falls are home to working class and vulnerable communities experiencing harsh realities. Residents and community leaders are working to address the lack of access to affordable nutritious food, activate public spaces, and help gain support for improvements to the built environment that increase connectivity and walkability.

COMMUNITY FAST FACTS

- 2 out of 3 residents of Niagara Falls make less than \$25,000 per year.
- 65% of children in the school district are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.
- 39% of children live in poverty.
- Unemployment rate is 7.9% on average, and 17.1% for black residents.
- 30% of adults, 21% of children, and 13.2% low-income pre-schoolers are obese.
- 10% of adults have diabetes.

PROJECT GOALS

- Address the lack of access to healthy food;
- Activate public spaces for play and socialization; and
- Identify desires for lifestyle change indicated by residents in the target neighborhoods.

WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED TO DATE

HEALTHY FOODS:

- Built 5 new community gardens;
- Increased the number of farmers markets participating in the Double Up Food Bucks initiative from 15 to 81, expanding the program from 5 to 11 counties;
- Expanded the number of farmers markets using EBT and accepting SNAP to 4; and
- Secured a USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture grant of \$300,000 to expand the Double Up Food Bucks program.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:

- Planned and implemented four Pop-Up Parks, activating underused existing public spaces.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

- Formed Resident Engagement Council, which trains residents to lead community-improvement initiatives; and
- Created the Niagara Falls Youth City Council, made up of high school youth who are formally advising the Niagara Falls City Council on issues pertaining to youth and recreation in Niagara Falls.

WHAT WE'RE INVESTING IN

- Expanding Double Up Bucks Program into a year-round program at supermarkets;
- Developing Wholesome Foods Pop Up Market to bring fresh foods to the community; and
- Replicating MAPSCorps in the community.