



# Strategic Plan

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2015 - 2020

Prepared by the Be Healthy Berrien Steering Committee for Berrien County community members and leaders.





January 2015

To the community members and leaders of Berrien County,

I am pleased to present Be Healthy Berrien's 2015-2020 Strategic Plan for addressing obesity in Southwest Michigan. The plan has been created to provide you with the best available data, a detailed description of Be Healthy Berrien's action plan, and to provide a method for reporting progress on each of the identified strategies.

Much has been accomplished since the inception of the Berrien County obesity-reduction initiative in 2010. I encourage you to review the Background to learn about the creation of Be Healthy Berrien and the Milestones to see our accomplishments. Many partners are contributing to the effort to reduce and prevent obesity in Southwest Michigan, including the Be Healthy Berrien Steering Committee organizations, Andrews University, and Just Health Benton Harbor. The 2015-2020 Strategic Plan relies on developing additional partnerships - including schools, employers, local governments, and the healthcare industry - in order to accomplish our goal.

Personal responsibility for our own health is only part of the obesity prevention picture. Be Healthy Berrien aims to ensure that our environments – our communities, worksites, and schools – make it easier for us all to make healthy choices about eating and physical activity every day. The strategies and action items in this plan aim to connect organizations, groups, and individuals to create more opportunities for making healthy choices all around us.

Thank you for taking the time to review this plan. I encourage you to identify ways you can become involved Be Healthy Berrien's work. Please feel free to contact [BeHealthyBerrien@gmail.com](mailto:BeHealthyBerrien@gmail.com) and let us know how you would like to join our collaborative effort.

In Health,

*Mark Weber*

Mark Weber  
Chair, Be Healthy Berrien

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# Acknowledgements

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The Be Healthy Berrien initiative would not be possible without the participation of:

## **Steering Committee Participants**

Berrien County Health Department  
Lakeland HealthCare  
Southwest Michigan Planning Commission  
United Way of Southwest Michigan  
Benton Harbor-St. Joseph YMCA  
Niles-Buchanan YMCA

## **Be Healthy Berrien Coordinator**

Heather Cole

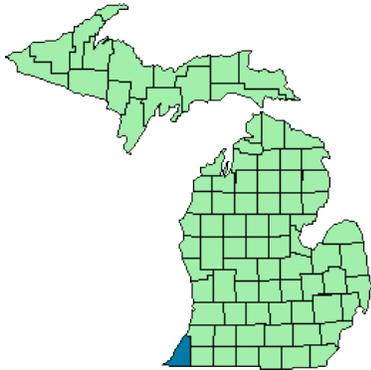
## **Funding Organizations**

Lakeland HealthCare  
United Way of Southwest Michigan  
Benton Harbor-St. Joseph YMCA/YMCA of the USA  
Berrien County Health Department/Michigan Department of Community Health

**Special thanks to the Healthy Berrien Consortium for leading the development  
of the Be Healthy Berrien initiative**

# Introduction

Be Healthy Berrien is a county-wide partnership of Berrien County Health Department, Lakeland HealthCare, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, United Way of Southwest Michigan, Benton Harbor-St. Joseph YMCA, and Niles-Buchanan YMCA. Our partners are committed to working together to reduce obesity and chronic illness through policy, systems, and environmental change. Be Healthy Berrien is working with community partners to increase access to healthy foods and physical activity for all residents, making healthy choices easy for people regardless of age, disability/mobility, or socioeconomic status.



*Mission: Be Healthy Berrien is a union of organizations working to reduce and prevent obesity in Berrien County through policy, systems, and environmental changes*

**Figure 1.** Map of Berrien County Michigan.

Data Source: [www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov)

Berrien County Michigan is located in the far southwest corner of Michigan, often referred to as “Michigan’s Great Southwest.” There are approximately 155,252 residents living in Berrien County according to the US Census 2013 population estimate. There are wide variations in population density throughout the county, which includes few urban areas, vast rural areas, and several small lakeshore communities located on the coast of Lake Michigan.

**Table 1.** 2013 Berrien County population estimates. Data Source: US Census Bureau

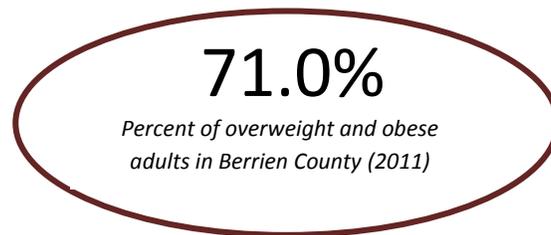
<b>Population (2013 estimate)</b>	<b>155,252</b>
White alone, percent, 2013	79.8%
Black or African American alone, percent, 2013	15.4%
Hispanic or Latino, percent, 2013	5.0%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent, 2013	0.6%
Asian alone, percent, 2013	1.8%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent, 2013	0.1%
Two or More Races, percent, 2013	2.3%
<b>Median household income, 2008-2012</b>	<b>\$43,471</b>
<b>Persons below poverty level, percent, 2008-2012</b>	<b>17.4%</b>

# Background

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The vision of Be Healthy Berrien was first created in 2010. A call to action by the Healthy Berrien Consortium led to Lakeland HealthCare beginning the first county-wide collaborative effort to address the problem of obesity in Berrien County. Over the course of several months, the coalition took on several forms with several different organizations taking part in the effort. The group became more formalized in 2011 under the name Be Healthy Berrien, with the current steering committee organizations developing the mission statement to focus on policy, systems, and environmental changes.

The prevalence of obesity has been increasing across the United States for many years, with the state of Michigan regularly ranked as one of the most obese states in the country. In 2011, 27.8%<sup>1</sup> of adults in the US were considered obese while in the state of Michigan, the adult obesity rate was 31.3%<sup>2</sup>. In that same year, Berrien County's obesity rate was even higher than the state average at 39.9%<sup>3</sup>, meaning nearly 2 in 5 adults in Berrien County had a body mass index above 30. Additionally, 31.1%<sup>3</sup> of Berrien County adults were overweight and at risk for becoming obese in the future.



**Figure 2.** Percent of overweight and obese adults in Berrien County  
*Data Source: 2011 Berrien County BRFSS*

Obesity is the leading cause of many of the most common and costly medical problems treated in the United States. Having a body mass index above 30 greatly raises the risk of developing chronic diseases like:

- Coronary Heart Disease
- High Blood Pressure
- Stroke
- Type 2 Diabetes
- High Cholesterol
- Metabolic Syndrome
- Cancer
- Osteoarthritis

In 2011, 3 of the top 5 leading causes of death in Michigan were from chronic diseases linked with obesity (heart disease, cancer, and stroke).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Source: US Behavior Risk Factor Survey, 2011

<sup>2</sup> Source: Michigan Behavior Risk Factor Survey, 2011

<sup>3</sup> Source: Berrien County Behavior Risk Factor Survey, 2011

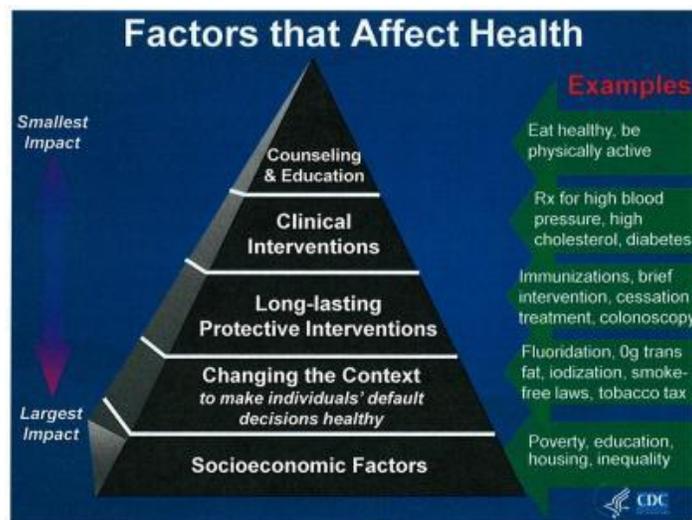
<sup>4</sup> Source: Michigan Department of Community Health, 2012 Michigan Death Certificate Registry

## Be Healthy Berrien's Process

The Be Healthy Berrien steering committee has chosen to act using a collective impact model. Through this model, Be Healthy Berrien aims to act as a convening organization to bring detached groups, individuals, and organizations together in order to connect and enhance new and existing initiatives and programs aimed at increasing access to healthy food and physical activity for all residents.

Collective impact is defined as the commitment of a group of leaders from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific problem, using a structured form of collaboration. The collective impact model hinges on the idea that large-scale social change comes from better cross-sector coordination rather than from the isolated intervention of individual organizations.

“It is unreasonable to expect that people will change their behavior easily when so many forces in the social, cultural, and physical environment conspire against such change.”<sup>5</sup>



**Figure 3.** Factors that affect health. *Data Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

Be Healthy Berrien is focusing on creating policy, system, and environmental changes aimed at increasing access to fruits and vegetables and increasing access to physical activity. These efforts, as opposed to those focused on the individual, work by creating a context where the healthy choice becomes the default choice, leading to a long-term reduction in obesity-causing behaviors within the population. Policy change includes the formal or informal passing of laws, ordinances, resolutions, mandates, regulations, or rules by public or private organizations. System change involves change made to the rules or infrastructure within an organization or change in the way organizations interact with one another. Systems change and policy change often work hand-in-hand. Environmental change is a change made to the physical environment. Be Healthy Berrien is also focusing on engaging leaders and decision makers through advocacy and communication strategies.

<sup>5</sup> Institute of Medicine, Smedley, B. D., & Syme, S. L. (2000). Promoting health: Intervention strategies from social and behavioral research. Washington DC: National Academy Press.

# Milestones

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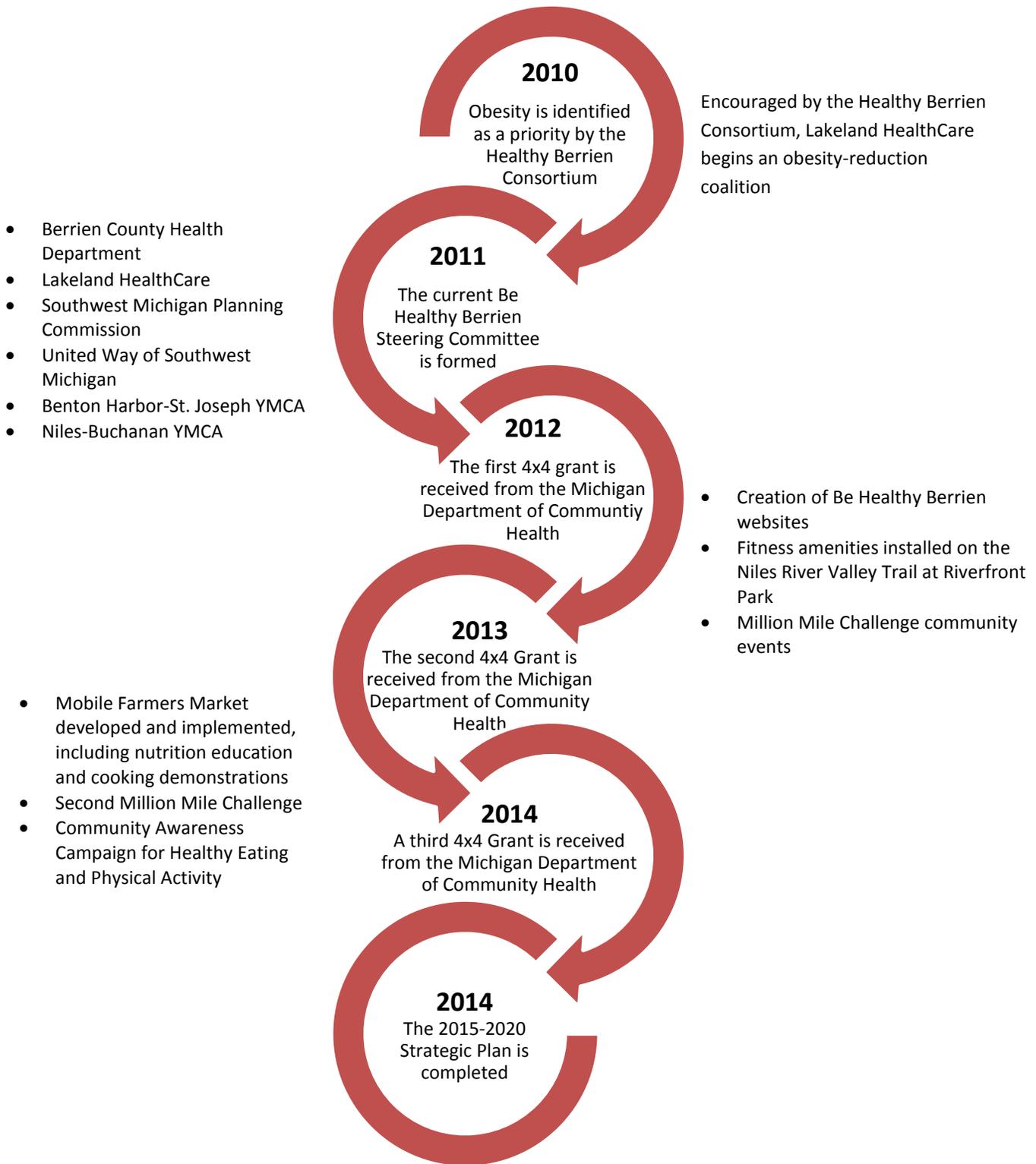


Figure 4. Be Healthy Berrien milestones

## Best Available Data

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The measurements and indicators cited in this plan are based on the best available data sources obtainable by the Be Healthy Berrien steering committee. The selected interventions and indicators were influenced by Healthy People 2020 measurements, evidence-informed best practices cited in the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps *What Works for Health Database*, and innovative strategies developed through the expertise of steering committee members.

Local data was obtained through the 2011 Berrien County Behavior Risk Factor Survey (BRFS), conducted by the Berrien County Health Department. The BRFS is also conducted at the state and national levels by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention annually, providing valid and reliable data that can be used for comparison. The Berrien County BRFS is conducted every three years, and will continue to be used by Be Healthy Berrien as the measurement tool to evaluate success.

While the Berrien County BRFS provides accurate data for adults in Berrien County, there are currently no reliable data sources for local youth statistics. The Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth survey has not been implemented in enough Berrien County schools to provide a valid sample size. Therefore, the best available data at this time for measuring youth health statistics is obtained through analysis of the responses of 18-24 year olds in the Berrien County BRFS survey. Be Healthy Berrien aims to create a system of shared measures for obtaining valid and reliable youth data in the future.

## Goal, Objectives, Strategies, and Action Items

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Be Healthy Berrien’s goal is to decrease the proportion of obese adults by 10% from 39.9% to 35.9% by 2020.

The tables in the following pages detail the objectives, strategies, and action items that work as the blueprints for Be Healthy Berrien’s actions. The strategies and action items represent both evidence-based and innovative approaches to solving the problem of obesity.

**Objective 1: Engage community leaders and stakeholders in creating infrastructure that supports healthy lifestyles**

**Table 2.** Summary of Be Healthy Berrien’s policy change action items and outcomes/measures

Strategy	Action Item	Desired Outcome/ Performance Measures
<b>1.1 Advocate for changes to policy</b>	1.1.a: Provide resources and technical assistance to employers for implementing worksite wellness policies to accommodate physical activity and healthy eating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- By 2016, resources will be provided to 25 employers</li> <li>- By 2020, resources will be provided to an additional 50 employers</li> <li>-By 2020, 50% of employers who receive resources will have implemented at least one worksite wellness policy</li> </ul>
	1.1.b: Provide current and newly elected local officials with information on incorporating Health Impact Assessment into decision making	- By 2020, 50% of locally elected officials will be presented with information on incorporating Health Impact Assessment into decision making
	1.1.c: Advocate for inclusion of measures to improve health in all new municipality master plans	- By 2020, 100% of municipalities will be presented with information regarding inclusion of measures to improve health in master planning

## Goal, Objectives, Strategies, and Action Items

### Objective 1: Engage community leaders and stakeholders in creating infrastructure that supports healthy lifestyles

**Table 3.** Summary of Be Healthy Berrien’s system change action items and outcomes/measures

Strategy	Action Item	Desired Outcome/ Performance Measures
1.2 Lead efforts to make changes to systems	1.2.a: Work with Lakeland HealthCare to encourage primary care providers to assess and discuss BMI with patients during annual exams	- By 2020, 50% of Lakeland HealthCare primary care providers will document a BMI discussion in the EPIC system for each patient’s annual exam
	1.2.b: Use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to identify communities with higher obesity-related disparities and risks and develop a data-driven decision making model that will inform/enhance Be Healthy Berrien workplans and engage stakeholders	- By 2016, Be Healthy Berrien will implement a data-driven decision making model for planning interventions and activities - By 2016, 12 organizations will receive data-driven decision making presentations

# Goal, Objectives, Strategies, and Action Items

## Objective 1: Engage community leaders and stakeholders in creating infrastructure that supports healthy lifestyles

**Table 4.** Summary of Be Healthy Berrien’s communication action items and outcomes/measurees

Strategy	Action Item	Desired Outcome/ Performance Measures
<b>1.3 Create and implement an annual Be Healthy Berrien communication plan that utilizes Constant Contact newsletters, social media, traditional media, Be Healthy Berrien websites, and Steering Committee partner publications</b>	1.3.a: Include a communication and outreach plan in all Be Healthy Berrien Action Item plans about the problems of obesity, encouraging physical activity and/or eating fruits and vegetables	- By 2020, 70% of residents in Berrien County will be reached through Be Healthy Berrien communication and outreach activities
	1.3.b: Compile and print a report using local data showing the health impact of obesity, fruit/vegetable consumption, and physical activity	- By 2020, a report will be distributed to at least 25 organizations
	1.3.c: Update the Be Healthy Berrien webpages to provide a more useful user-experience	- By 2020, the <a href="http://BeHealthyBerrien.org">BeHealthyBerrien.org</a> website will have a measureable increase of users following each update
	1.3.d: Provide a BMI Calculator on the BHB website for people to do basic self-assessment of their weight status	- By 2016, <a href="http://BeHealthyBerrien.org">BeHealthyBerrien.org</a> will include a BMI Calculator
	1.3.e: Build an infrastructure for collecting and sharing information about physical activity opportunities	- By 2020, there will be a 50% increase in the number of users of <a href="http://BeActiveBerrien.org">BeActiveBerrien.org</a> - By 2020, all partner-organized events will be promoted on <a href="http://BeHealthyBerrien.org">BeHealthyBerrien.org</a>
	1.3.f: Encourage the users of <a href="http://www.BeActiveBerrien.org">www.BeActiveBerrien.org</a> to tell their stories of using the website with video uploads	- By 2020, 25 video stories will be uploaded by users of <a href="http://BeActiveBerrien.org">BeActiveBerrien.org</a>
	1.3.g: Hold at least 3 screenings of “Weight of the Nation” segments annually that include a discussion about how to address obesity in communities	- By 2020, 150 people will attend screenings of “Weight of the Nation”

# Goal, Objectives, Strategies, and Action Items

## Objective 2 – Increase physical activity among adults to

- **Decrease the percentage of adults who report no leisure time physical activity by 10% from 30.2% to 27.2%**
- **Increase the percentage of adults who get adequate aerobic physical activity by 10% from 45.1% to 49.6%**

**Table 5.** Summary of Be Healthy Berrien’s transportation advocacy action items and outcomes/measures

Strategy	Action Item	Desired Outcome/ Performance Measures
<b>2.1 Advocate for change in transportation infrastructure that enables more physical activity</b>	2.1.a: Advocate for fixed route public transportation in urban areas that links residents to essential community assets	- By 2020, there will be an increase in users of fixed route public transportation in Benton Harbor
	2.1.b Increase the number of cities, towns, and villages that have complete streets initiatives	-By 2020, 20% of cities/towns/villages will have complete streets initiatives - By 2020, 20 additional miles of paved 4’ shoulders and striping on roads outside of urban areas will be planned - By 2020, 10 miles of sidewalk additions or improvements will be planned
	2.1.c Research high-impact corridors and engage community leaders within these areas to improve non-motorized connectivity between jurisdictions	- By 2020, connections within at least 2 high-impact corridors will be planned

## Goal, Objectives, Strategies, and Action Items

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### Objective 2 – Increase physical activity among adults to

- **Decrease the percentage of adults who report no leisure time physical activity by 10% from 30.2% to 27.2%**
- **Increase the percentage of adults who get adequate aerobic physical activity by 10% from 45.1% to 49.6%**

**Table 6.** Summary of Be Healthy Berrien’s built environment action items and outcomes/measures

Strategy	Action Item	Desired Outcome/ Performance Measures
<b>2.2 Collaborate in efforts to create change in the built environment to elicit more physical activity</b>	2.2.a: Educate community leaders about the connection between the built environment and health	- By 2020, 25 community leaders will be presented with information on the connection between the built environment and health
	2.2.b: Increase the number of recreation locations to ensure that there are sites located within ¼ mile of all residences in urban areas	- By 2020, 50% of all residences in urban areas will be located within ¼ mile of at least one recreation location

## Goal, Objectives, Strategies, and Action Items

**Objective 3: Increase the percentage of adults eating 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily by 10% from 17.1% to 18.8%**

**Table 7.** Summary of Be Healthy Berrien’s food access action items and outcomes/measures

Strategy	Action Item	Desired Outcome/ Performance Measures
<b>3.1 Increase access to fruits and vegetables within four components of food access: financial, physical proximity, acceptability, and culinary knowledge</b>	3.1.a: Lead the development and expansion of a Mobile Farmers Market to target lower-income communities (physical proximity, financial)	- By 2020, The Mobile Farmers Market will show an annual increase in sales and be fully operational without grant funding
	3.1.b: Create an inventory of community gardens in Berrien County and research opportunities to increase capacity and fill gaps	- By 2020, 25% of all community gardens will be systematically connected and engaged in sharing resources/expertise
	3.1.c: Leverage existing programs to create opportunities for community education sessions to be provided in areas that Be Healthy Berrien has chosen to target, including fruit/vegetable taste testing (acceptability), cooking demonstrations (acceptability, financial, culinary knowledge), and/or information on preserving fruits and vegetables	- By 2020, 500 individuals in targeted communities will be reached through community education sessions that include fruit/vegetable taste testing, cooking demonstrations, and/or information on preserving fruits and vegetables
	3.1.d: Increase the number of farmers markets and CSAs that accept Bridge Cards and other forms of food assistance	- By 2020, 25% of all farmers markets and CSAs will accept Bridge Card payments

## Goal, Objectives, Strategies, and Action Items

**Objective 3: Increase the percentage of adults eating 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily by 10% from 17.1% to 18.8%**

**Table 8.** Summary of Be Healthy Berrien’s produce growing and procurement action items and outcomes/measures

Strategy	Action Item	Desired Outcome/ Performance Measures
<b>3.2 Increase the opportunity for access to locally grown fruits and vegetables through enhancements to growing and procurement processes</b>	3.2.a: Research local, regional, and state food system initiatives aimed at improving food access to identify advocacy opportunities	- By 2020, at least 5 advocacy opportunities related to local, regional, and state food system will be leveraged
	3.2.b: Increase the number of municipalities with local zoning ordinances permitting community gardening and urban farming	- By 2020, 20% of municipalities will have zoning ordinances that permit community gardening and urban farming

## Goal, Objectives, Strategies, and Action Items

**Objective 4: Engage k-12 school leaders and stakeholders in creating infrastructure that supports healthy lifestyles to**

- **Decrease the percentage of 18 – 24 year olds who report no leisure time physical activity by 10% from 16.2% to 14.6%**
- **Increase the percentage of 18 – 24 year olds who get adequate aerobic physical activity by 10% from 49.1% to 54.0%**
- **Increase the percentage of 18-24 year olds who eat 5 or more servings of fruit and vegetables each day by 10% from 7.3% to 8.0%**

**Table 9.** Summary of Be Healthy Berrien’s youth policy and system change action items and outcomes/measures

Strategy	Action Item	Desired Outcome/ Performance Measures
<b>4.1 Lead efforts to create Policy and System changes that elicit more physical activity and improve nutrition among youth</b>	4.1.a: Increase the number of k-12 school districts with joint-use agreements to enable community use of school facilities for physical activity (i.e. gymnasium, track, pool, weight room, etc.)	- By 2020, 30% of all in-use school buildings will have joint-use agreements
	4.1.b: Advocate for policies that expand or enhance school-based physical education (PE) classes, including adding new PE classes, lengthening existing PE classes, or increasing physical activity during PE class	- By 2020, 10% of school districts and parochial schools will have policies that expand or enhance school-based physical education (PE) classes
	4.1.c: Increase the number of schools with Safe Routes to School initiatives	- By 2020, 20% of all in-use school buildings will have Safe Routes to School initiatives
	4.1.d: Increase the number of k-12 schools that are <i>Michigan Team Nutrition</i> schools	- By 2020, 20% of all in-use school buildings will register to be <i>Michigan Team Nutrition</i> schools

## Moving Forward

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In the coming months and years, the Be Healthy Berrien steering committee will continue the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating each strategy defined in this plan. Be Healthy Berrien will work to build relationships with community leaders and stakeholders to help guide efforts that will make Berrien County a healthier place to live, work, learn, and play. The steering committee will continue to seek additional funding opportunities to diversify the financial structure of the collaborative and to move the action plans forward.

Individuals and organizations wishing to get involved with Be Healthy Berrien are welcome and should contact Heather Cole, Be Healthy Berrien Coordinator, at [BeHealthyBerrien@gmail.com](mailto:BeHealthyBerrien@gmail.com) for more information.