



## Kane County, IL

▲ Community Example from Chapter 2 of “Lessons for Leaders:”  
*Lessons in Communication*

### Community Background

Kane County is a growing county of more than 500,000 west of Chicago that includes the cities of Aurora and Elgin and a significant Latino population. With bipartisan political leadership from the beginning, Making Kane County Fit for Kids emphasized broad-based citizen engagement, integrated approaches across disciplines into its long-range planning, and advanced childhood obesity prevention across nine different sectors of the community.

### Community Action

Led by the Kane County Health Department, this *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* (HKHC) partnership found it useful to think beyond childhood obesity and highlight the broader benefits of its healthy eating and active living work. It framed its initiative and planning products more broadly as “Fit for Kids,” and it developed an integrated suite of long-range plans with the theme “Healthy People, Healthy Living and Healthy Communities” under the umbrella brand “Quality of Kane.” The partnership consistently talked about themes such as “prosperity,” “quality of life” and “for everyone,” in addition to health. These themes benefited the work as specific projects progressed.

For example, as the partnership began addressing low rates of fruit and vegetable consumption and increasing access to fresh produce, it collected sales data at new farmers’ markets and spoke knowledgably to elected officials about LINK (Illinois’ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) as an economic development opportunity. When a health impact assessment of a proposed farmland protection policy showed that the policy would spur local fresh food production and produce positive health results, the partnership worked with the Farm Bureau and emphasized the positive impact it could have for the county’s agricultural economy. In 2013, the Farmland Protection ordinance, called Growing for Kane, passed and advanced both goals.

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Efforts like these to highlight benefits that resonate broadly have allowed the healthy communities work in Kane County to thrive, even after changes in the initial leadership were followed by a significant post-election change on the county board.