

**Kane County Farmland Protection Ordinance
Health Impact Assessment**

Evaluation Findings

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The findings and conclusions presented in this report are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of the officers and/or trustees of Northern Illinois University. For more information, please contact Jim Ciesla at jciesla@niu.edu or 815.753.3409 or David Stone at dastone@niu.edu or 815.753.9282.

Table of Contents

Acronyms and Terms	iv
Summary of Findings	vi
A. Introduction	9
B. Background	9
Kane County Illinois	10
Planning in Kane County	11
C. Evaluation Approach	12
Semi-structured Interviews	12
Content Analysis	13
Direct Observation	13
D. Findings	14
Screening	14
Scoping	16
Community Engagement	18
Recommendations	19
Reporting	20
The HIA Project Process	20
Perceived Impact of the Project	21
E. Conclusions	22

Acronyms and Terms

American Farmland Trust (AFT) – an organization with a mission to protect farmland and ranch land in the United States, promote environmentally sound farming practices, and keep farmers on the land.

Food Hub – organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products primarily from local and regional producers for the purpose of strengthening producer capacity and access to wholesale, retail, and institutional markets. Known to have positive economic, social, and environmental impacts in their communities, and fill a critical gap in regional food systems.

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) – procedures, methods, and tools used to evaluate a policy, program or project's potential effects on the health of a population and the distribution of those effects within the population; intended to produce a set of evidence-based recommendations to inform decision-making.

Health Impact Project (HIP) – a national initiative designed to promote the use of health impact assessments (HIAs) as a decision-making tool for policymakers; a collaboration of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Human Impact Partners – U.S. organization providing training, technical assistance, and research to help organizations and public agencies conduct health-based analyses, particularly Health Impact Assessments.

Kane County 2040 Plan – Kane County Board policy document; provides strategic recommendations and objectives for long-range planning in Kane County.

Kane County Development and Community Services Department (KDCSD) – Co-manager of the *Kane County Farmland Protection Ordinance Health Impact Assessment* project with the Kane County Health Department.

Kane County Farm Bureau (KCFB) – organization chartered to help Kane County farmers improve their production practices; stated mission to serve both rural and urban people who are interested in the well-being of agriculture in Kane County.

Kane County Health Department (KCHD) – co-manager of the *Kane County Farmland Protection Ordinance Health Impact Assessment* project with the Kane County Development and Community Services Department.

Kane County Planning Cooperative (KCPC) – policy implementation initiative; part of the 2040 Plan and approved by Kane County Regional Planning Commission.

Northern Illinois University (NIU) – home institution of the evaluation team. NIU is a sub-contractor to Kane County for the evaluation component of the project.

Pew Charitable Trusts – an independent non-profit, non-governmental organization with a mission to serve the public interest by improving public policy, informing the public, and stimulating civic life.

Prime Farmland – designation assigned by the U.S. Department of Agriculture classifying available land that has highly favorable physical and chemical characteristics for producing commercial agricultural products.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation – philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care with a mission is to improve the health and health care of all Americans.

Triangulation – an evaluation strategy that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from more than two sources.

Summary of Findings

This evaluation was guided by eight evaluation questions. The questions and a summary of key findings are presented below:

What essential elements of the HIA process contributed to the success or failure of the project during various phases of implementation? What challenges and opportunities for improvement occurred?

Finding 1: Previous collaboration between Kane County Development and Community Services and the Health Departments—particularly the Making Kane County Fit for Kids, Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities project—served as a critical point of reference among county staff involved in the HIA project.

Finding 2: Effective engagement of communities most impacted by the decision through effective community engagement was a key strength of the project.

Finding 3: It was challenging to maintain the interest among people in the groups affected by the proposed policy. While engaged in the process early on, some lost interest over the eighteen-month duration of the project. A shorter faster moving process might be more effective.

Were important milestones and key activities met and fully carried out as specified in the funding proposal?

Finding 4: The project team carried out all phases of the project as specified in the funding proposal.

Finding 5: The project led to the development of a high quality HIA document consistent with best HIA practices.

Was the HIA conducted according to established standards? What analytic methods were used? Were the Analytic methods used appropriately?

Finding 6: The HIA was conducted according to prevailing standards in the HIA field.

Finding 7: The project team used a wide variety of analytic methods to conduct the HIA. They included a baseline assessment of existing national, state, and county data, an exhaustive search of published works, public meetings, interviews, questionnaires among others. The analytic methods were used appropriately.

In what ways did the project team identify and engage the communities most likely to be affected by the ordinance? Were the actions taken to engage the community appropriate to the task of completing the HIA?

Finding 8: The outreach activities lead to a high level of engagement of the groups most affected by the ordinance. This was a key strength of the project. The project team identified and sought involvement of key groups, most notably the Kane County Farm Bureau and the Northern Illinois Food Bank, and a significant number of others, early in the process and effectively used relationships established to achieve the objectives of the project.

Finding 9: The efforts undertaken to engage key community members, groups, and organizations was appropriate to the task of completing the HIA.

How effective were the training and technical assistance and what ways, if any, could they be improved?

Finding 10: The project team indicated that the HIA training they received in April 2012 was effective. The team benefitted particularly from the scoping exercise, the practice of which lead to comprehensive scoping evident in the final HIA.

Finding 11: The project team indicated that the technical assistance they received throughout the process was adequate but the timing of assistance with specific tasks could be improved.

What impact did the HIA have on decision-making and implementation of the proposed recommendations up to the time that the evaluation is conducted?

Finding 12: There is strong evidence to suggest that the HIA had a direct impact on the enactment of Kane County ordinance 13-240, a sister ordinance to the County's established farmland protection ordinance.

What additional impact(s), if any, occurred beyond the HIA objectives?

Finding 13: The HIA project improved the organizational capacity of the Kane County Development and Community Services and the Kane County Health Departments to evaluate health related policy in a systematic way.

Finding 14: The partnerships with the groups and organizations engaged during the HIA project have the potential to endure beyond the life of the project and to be of continuing reciprocal value.

What impact or potential impact does the HIA process have on population health and the 2040 Master Plan's policies of *Healthy People, Healthy Living, and Healthy Communities*?

Finding 15: The project addresses the Kane County 2040 Master Plan's objective of healthy living by considering land use policies that effect population health.

Finding 16: The HIA influenced the passage of County Ordinance 13-240 which balanced farmland protection policies to encourage locally-grown fruits, vegetables, whole grains with the objective of protecting land where traditional commodity crops are grown (the original intent of the farmland protection policies), potentially leading to changes in dietary consumption and population health improvements.

A. Introduction

This report is an evaluation conducted by Northern Illinois University of the *Kane County Farmland Protection Ordinance Health Impact Assessment* project (the project). The purpose of the project was to “conduct a health impact assessment of a proposed amendment to a Kane County, Illinois farmland protection law.”ⁱ Funding for the project was provided by a collaboration of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trusts through the Health Impact Project.ⁱⁱ An interdisciplinary group from the Kane County Development and Community Services Department (KDCSD) and the Kane County Health Department (KCHD) co-managed the project. The other major partners in the KCHIA initiative are the American Farmland Trust and the Kane County Farm Bureau both of whom provided input during the HIA and its implementation.

B. Background

The Health Impact Project (HIP), a collaboration of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts, is a national initiative dedicated to promoting the use of health impact assessment (HIA) in the United States. Started in 2009, the HIP works with federal, tribal, state, county, and city-level policy bodies across the country to promote the HIA process, facilitate their use, and examine their benefits. The HIP promotes the HIA process by acting as a training, information dissemination, and grant making body. Kane County was awarded funding for this health impact assessment project in January 2012, and the Kane County Board adopted resolution 12-230 accepting the project funds and designated and authorized staff to finalize and execute the funding agreement (Contract ID 2290).

The Literature

Policies and programs that have historically not been recognized as related to health are now known to have important health consequences. A growing body of research indicates that living conditions—including such factors as housing quality, exposure to pollution, access to healthy and affordable foods, and safe places to exercise—have an obvious relationship to the health and well-being of people and communities.ⁱⁱⁱ These factors shape the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. The current view is that health is determined by multiple factors, many of which fall outside the traditional health field.^{iv}

There is growing interest in using policy approaches in non-health-related sectors such as transportation, housing, agriculture, and education to address public health issues.^{v,vi,vii} Many now recognize that substantial improvements in public health will occur only by ensuring that health considerations are factored into projects, programs, plans, and policies in these sectors. Health impact assessment (HIA) has arisen as an especially promising way to factor health considerations into planning and decision-making processes.^{viii} HIA is defined in various ways but essentially is a structured process using scientific data, professional expertise, and input from the communities most affected by a proposed policy, to identify and evaluate public health consequences of proposals and suggests actions that could be taken to minimize adverse health impacts and optimize beneficial ones. While HIA

techniques have been used in Europe and elsewhere for some time, their use is not as well established in the United States.^{ix} It is particularly important that HIAs be rigorously evaluated, especially in policy environments found in the United States, to demonstrate their worth and enhance their value. The purpose of this evaluation is to provide objective evidence of the effectiveness of the Kane County Farmland Protection Ordinance Health Impact Assessment in particular and to contribute to the broader understanding of HIA as a method. This evaluation addresses the HIA process and its impact on decisions made by the Kane County board.

The HIA process has become standardized and has six steps:

1. **Screening:** Determines the need and value of an HIA.
2. **Scoping:** Determines which health impacts to evaluate, the methods for analysis, and the work plan for completing the assessment.
3. **Assessment:** Provides: a) profile of existing health conditions; b) evaluation of health impacts.
4. **Recommendations:** Provides strategies to manage identified adverse health impacts.
5. **Reporting:** Includes development of the HIA report and communication of findings and recommendations to decision makers, affected communities and other organizations and groups with a request for feedback.
6. **Monitoring:** Tracks impacts of the HIA on decision making processes and the decision, as well as impacts of the decision on health determinants.

Kane County Illinois

Kane County Illinois, located 40 miles west of Chicago, is home to 515,269 people. It is the fifth largest Illinois County by population and 51st largest by area. Its population has grown significantly since 1990 when it was 317,471. By 2040, the population is expected to reach 800,000. The County includes a mix of urban, suburban, and rural communities in 30 municipalities. Sixty percent of Kane residents live in one of three demographically diverse, economically challenged cities, Aurora (the second largest city in IL), Elgin (the eighth largest in IL), and Carpentersville. Another 12 percent of Kane residents live in rural and unincorporated communities. The remainder, 28 percent, live in growing suburban communities on the County's east side.^x In terms of land mass, 315.7 square miles of the County or 60.2 percent is unincorporated and 208.44 square miles or 39.8 percent of total is incorporated. Illinois is ranked fifth in the nation for conversion of prime farmland and Kane is among IL counties under high pressure for development.^{xixii}

Kane County has the second highest proportion of obesity and overweight in the Chicago metropolitan area (63.9% of adults and 36.5% of youth). Deaths from diabetes and nephritis are higher than comparable state and national rates. Total deaths from cerebrovascular disease approach or exceed Illinois and U.S. age-adjusted rates. Food insecurity is a major concern in Kane where 44.5 percent of all children enrolled in school are eligible for subsidized meal programs.^{xiii} More than 10 ten percent of residents are low income including 3.8 percent who live in deep poverty.^{xiv}

Planning in Kane County

Kane County has a strong tradition of comprehensive planning dating back more than 50 years. As the County has grown and become more diverse the principle of “balanced growth” emerged in its planning efforts—balanced growth planning is a framework for coordinated decision-making about how policies and resources can promote economic growth and quality of life.

In 2010, the County Board passed a Conceptual Land Use Strategy resolution.^{xv} The Board’s resolution recognized the growing body of evidence pointing to the impact of land use on population health and identified the unique opportunity presented by state of Illinois’ requirements mandating health, land use and transportation plan updates. With its Strategy resolution, the Kane County Board became the only county government in Illinois to provide legislative policy direction to its executive leadership to integrate health, land-use, and transportation into a comprehensive master plan. In 2012, the County adopted an updated version of the Kane County Community Health Improvement Plan and the Kane County Transportation Plan. Together with the 2040 County Master Plan (updated in 2012), these plans provide strategic recommendations and objectives for long-range planning in Kane County. The plans guide Kane County Board decisions as well as municipal and township planning decisions.

Farmland Protection Program

The Kane County Board created the Farmland Protection Program in 2001 through Ordinance 01-67 as an implementation program of the Land Resource Management Planning initiative. The ordinance established the Kane County Farmland Protection Commission whose duties include maximizing resources and coordinating efforts to preserve open spaces and preserve the County’s prime farmland. The ordinance grants the commission the authority to determine the interest of owners in donating or selling interests in their property for farmland protection purposes. The commission is made up of nine voting members, including the Chairman of the County Board, the Chairman of the Development Committee, a representative of the Kane County Farm Bureau and six members with background and experience in agriculture, finance, conservation, or planning. Since its inception, the protection program has invested over \$32.6 million in local and federal USDA Farmland Protection dollars permanently protecting approximately 5,000 acres of the finest soils and farmland. The program, which has 30 family farms, currently favors large acreage parcels producing conventional row crops such as corn and soybeans situated in rural Kane. At present, all participants in the farm protection program are conventional row crop and livestock producers.

In recognition of the growing interest in locally grown foods and the opportunity to secure funds for these types of producers, a proposed amendment was designed in 2012 to expand eligibility criteria to include small food producing farms balancing investments in permanent farmland protection in all of the county’s planning regions including food and farms, critical growth, and sustainable urban corridors, and designed to encourage local food production. These policy changes were the focus of the HIA. The policy assumes subsequent increases in the availability of locally-grown fruits, vegetables and whole grains in foods in homes, schools, farmers markets, corner stores, and other community sites and, in

turn, corresponding changes in dietary consumption and population health improvement. The goal of the HIA was to test these assumptions and provide recommendations to enhance the health promoting aspects of the policy.

C. Evaluation Approach

Northern Illinois University is evaluating the effectiveness of the project in attaining its goals and objectives. The analysis presented in this report was prepared according to prevailing standards in the field of program evaluation.^{xvi} The protocol used in this evaluation conforms to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects.^{xvii} The evaluation team obtained the required human subjects approval from the NIU Institutional Review Board.^{xviii}

Program evaluation is a valuable tool for strengthening the quality of programs and improving the outcomes for the people they serve, but while evaluations address basic questions about a program's effectiveness, they have several important limitations. Program evaluations are most commonly designed to answer questions about the degree to which a program achieved its stated objectives and whether the program's goals were appropriate and useful, but they cannot determine cause and effect relationships between the program and its outcomes.^{xix} Readers should understand the findings presented in this report with this limitation in mind.

The purpose of this report is to present the results of the evaluation of the *Kane County Farmland Protection Ordinance Health Impact Assessment* project. It is not to give an exhaustive, detailed account chronicling every step of project. This report should be read in conjunction with the HIA document, *Growing for Kane: Health, Economy and Fresh Food*, and other important supporting documents, including the project narrative in the grant application submitted to Health Impact Partners in September 2011, and County ordinances themselves (No. 01-67 & 13-240).

The evaluation team used three primary data collection methods to gather information.

Semi-structured Interviews

The evaluation team created interview scripts for use with the three major participants in the project, Kane County staff, the Kane County Board Agriculture Committee, and the Kane County Farm Bureau. The evaluation team drew from sample evaluation questions provided by Human Impact Partners^{xx} and worked with key project personnel to develop the interview scripts. The scripts served as a framework of themes the interviewer would explore during the interview. While each script emphasized specific topics, interviews were flexible, allowing the interviewer to pose new questions during the interview to follow up on what the interviewee said. The evaluation team conducted interviews by telephone. The interviews ranged from 15 to 40 minutes in length. The evaluation team conducted a total of nine interviews.

Kane County Staff. The interview script for Kane County staff contained 28 questions broken down into to five categories related to, (1) the formal HIA steps of Screening, Scoping, and Recommendation generation, (2) the role, function, and effectiveness of the HIA Steering Committee, (3) the public engagement process, (4) the HIA process in broad terms, and (5)

the overall impact of the project. The evaluators interviewed five members of the Kane County Development and Community Services and the Kane County Health Departments who had responsibilities related the project.

Kane County Board, Agriculture Committee. The evaluation identified the seven members of the County Agriculture Committee, a standing committee of the County Board, for interviews. The Agriculture Committee has jurisdiction over the Farmland Protection Ordinance. Two members of the Agriculture Committee are members of the Farmland Protection Commission, by statute. The interview script for the County Board members contained 11 questions related to, (1) the role, function, and effectiveness of the HIA Steering Committee, (2) the effectiveness of the public engagement activities, (3) the reporting and feedback process, and (4) the overall impact of the project. The evaluators interviewed two County Board Agriculture Committee members.

The Kane County Farm Bureau and Northern Illinois Food Bank. The interview script for the Farm Bureau members and Food Bank staff contained thirteen questions related to, (1) the role, function, and effectiveness of the HIA Steering Committee, (2) the effectiveness of the public engagement activities, (3) the reporting and feedback process, and (4) the overall impact of the project. The evaluators interviewed three leaders of these organizations.

Content Analysis

The evaluation team conducted a content review of project documents including the original funding proposal, the HIA document *Growing for Kane: Health, Economy and Fresh Food* in various stages of its development from draft to final form, internal memoranda and other communication, promotional materials, minutes from Kane County Board and Board subcommittee meetings including the Agriculture Subcommittee and the Farmland Protection Commission, meeting minutes and other Kane County Farm Bureau documents, Kane County Board Resolutions, Ordinances and other supporting documents.

Direct Observation

Members of the evaluation team attended numerous program meetings as observers. The evaluators chose meetings that would allow information gathering at important stages of the project. They recorded observations, impressions, and comments in field notes. The evaluation team had unrestricted access to project meetings, events, and activities including county staff meetings, County Board and Agriculture Committee meetings, Kane County Farm Bureau meetings and others. The evaluation team attended over ten project related meetings.

The evaluation team used eight questions to guide the evaluation.

1. What essential elements of the process contributed to the success or failure of the project during various phases of implementation? What challenges and opportunities for improvement occurred?

2. Were important milestones and key activities met and fully carried out as specified in the funding proposal?
3. Was the project conducted according to established standards? What analytic methods were used? Were the Analytic methods used appropriately?
4. In what ways were communities, groups and organizations identified and engaged? Was the level of engagement appropriate to the task of completing the project?
5. How effective were the training and technical assistance and what ways, if any, could they be improved?
6. What impact did the project have on decision-making and implementation of the proposed recommendations up to the time that the evaluation is conducted?
7. What additional impact(s), if any, occurred beyond the project objectives?
8. What impact or potential impact does the project process have on population health and the 2040 Master Plan's policies of *Healthy People, Healthy Living, and Healthy Communities*?

D. Findings

The evaluation findings cover the major activities of the project. These findings highlight important themes related to project implementation, describe the project's successes and failures, and suggest causes for the successes and failures. Presented in narrative form for ease of reading, the evaluation team attempted to triangulate the major findings in as many situations as possible.

Screening

Screening is used to systematically decide when to do an HIA. All HIAs go through some type of screening process even if the process is not formal and initially recognized as part of an HIA. In this project, the original impetus for the HIA came from Kane County's long established practice of integrated health, land-use, and transportation planning. In particular, experience with the Making Kane County Fit for Kids, Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities project brought the issue of obesity and policies encouraging local food production to the attention of key county staff members. This initiative served as a critical point of reference among county staff involved in the HIA project.

Several county staff members described the screening process as beginning internally at the Health Department, but that the KCDCSD became involved early on and that the Farm Bureau was involved at a very early stage as well. None of the staff members interviewed suggested that other parties should have been involved—no important groups were omitted. Other projects considered during screening was the establishment of a stand-alone food hub, but it was quickly ruled out because of the large scope and cost of such an undertaking. The fact that studying the feasibility of locating a food hub in the

county emerges as a recommendation in the final HIA reflects the narrow scope of options considered in the screening process.

While opinions about when the screening process began and the initial impetus for the HIA vary between county staff members, this critical early step in the HIA process was interactive, identified major issues that needed to be addressed, lead to agreement on the important impacts the HIA proposal needed to address, and made it clear that an HIA project would be beneficial. This does not reflect a lack direction or coordination between the KCDCSD and the KCHD. To the contrary, it reflects a common understanding among key people in the KCDCSD and the KCHD of important health issues in the County, the role policy can play in improving health, confidence in the ability of the organizations to complete projects such as the HIA, and to reach planned policy goals. While initial screening was conducted early in the project in order to determine whether an HIA was needed and would add value to the process, a second level of screening took place after the project was approved. This second level of screening provided an opportunity to clarify the specific policy amendments that would be assessed and to determine how the HIA would best add value to the policy discussion. They arrived at the conclusion that the HIA could best bring tangible information to understand these impacts and the timing was right because so much land in the County was in flux.

Prior to arriving at the farmland protection ordinance as the target intervention of the HIA, the project team considered a range of options, including but not limited to an electric vehicle infrastructure ordinance, bus rapid transit, regional transportation plans, physical education requirements, implementing federal transportation plans for safe routes to school and menu labeling options including for vending machines.

The number of projects considered was expansive but considering the priority health problem, its origin in healthy food consumption, and the groups most likely to be affected—the Hispanic population, refugees, children, and suburban residents—the group thought that health was being considered in other plans but not in terms of farmland protection. The project team considered fully the potential for unequally distributed impacts.

In short, previous collaborations in the general area of health and policy lead to a systematic and effective screening process. The draft and final versions of the HIA document clearly describe the steps the project team undertook in arriving at the final Farmland Protection Ordinance amendment project (pp. 12-15).

The screening process described in the document reflects best practices in the field of Health Impact Assessment. All of the decision alternatives under consideration by the County Board were identified and considered. The project team sought to determine if conducting the HIA would add value to the process of amending the current farmland protection ordinance by sharing initial proposals for the amendment with experts in organizations most likely to be affected by amendments to gather their impressions and feedback. These organizations included the Kane County Farm Bureau, the Northern Illinois Food Bank, and the Kane County Fit for Kids Coordinator, a Registered Dietician, key staff at

Cadence Health a leading health system in Kane County, a local grower, and owner of Heritage Prairie Market. Additionally the project team assessed the availability of data, their understanding of appropriate methods and their technical capacity to do the analysis required by an HIA.

Scoping

Scoping sets the priorities the health impacts of interest for, and considers what methods should be utilized to test the expected changes in the health impacts. Scoping is usually done by HIA practitioners in consultation with technical experts and affected communities, groups and organizations. The evaluation team asked County staff members to describe the methods they used to identify and prioritize health issues during the scoping phase of the project. Their answers were highly consistent. In this project, the health department took the lead in the scoping process. Using skills obtained in the two-day HIA training in April 2012, health department staff used a pathway diagram with results from a community health assessment, county and sub-county health indicators, and other sources of data on obesity to identify and prioritize health issues. The Health Department conducted a series of one-on-one interviews, surveys, and community forums with affected communities, groups and organizations. The results of the scoping process are described in detail in the final HIA (pp. 15-18 and Appendix B).

Scoping is a systematic process of elimination. This step provides an opportunity to determine what impacts are most important to the decision makers. Understanding issues eliminated during the scoping process is an important consideration. Not only does this show robustness of the scoping process, but it is a key to understanding the successes or failures of an HIA in influencing its intended final health outcomes. Approaches to addressing health issues such as physical activity, health behaviors in schoolchildren, health disparities and chronic conditions were all considered in the scoping process but they were eliminated as potential targets of the HIA process. Several health issues identified by the evaluation team that were eliminated during the scoping process that were not discussed in the final HIA document related to the environment. Based on input from the Farm Bureau, the project team did not focus on air, soil and water quality—particularly the use of pesticides as an established agricultural practice.

The final HIA thoroughly documents the scoping process. The project team aggressively sought input from an exhaustive list of people, communities, groups, and organizations that were or could have been affected by the proposed ordinance. The process was inclusive, systematic, and comprehensive. In particular the research questions the project team used clearly and effectively identified the proposed ordinance's proximate effects, health outcomes, target (vulnerable) populations, geographic scope, the precise terms of the ordinance, and the current and future economic impact of the proposed ordinance.

The scoping process described in the document reflects best practices in the field of Health Impact Assessment. The project team dedicated a great deal of effort to scoping. The scoping process was bolstered by exercises undertaken during the April 19 & 20, 2012 two day training that was facilitated by HIP.

The project team assembled an invitation list of 43 potential participants representing over 20 county organizations including government bodies (the Cities of Aurora, Geneva, the Village of Algonquin), county services (County Soil and Water District, the Forest Preserve, the Department of Transportation, and project team organizations, the KDCSD and the KCHD), members of the academic community from the University of Illinois and Northern Illinois University, and community based organizations (the Northern Illinois Food Bank, the Farm Bureau, an Open lands advocacy organization, the County Garden Network, and others), and organizations from the private sector (Super Value, Sodexo), and state agencies (the Illinois Department of Agriculture and the U of I Extension). The invitees represented a very significant cross section of organizations and communities most impacted by the decision. This represented a nearly exhaustive outreach effort to include potentially affected parties in the screening process.

The scoping clearly identified all of the decision alternatives that could have been considered by decision-makers at the time the HIA would eventually be considered. Detailed notes taken during the training session showed that a very comprehensive list of considerations and the availability of data, methods, resources, and technical capacity to conduct needed analysis were taken into account, including:

- How many total acres and what numbers of farms are in local production? How many acres and what number of farms would be added? (Data source: Census of Agriculture)
- How many farms are eligible for easement programs currently? How would this change under the new ordinance? (Data source: Development Department, tax assessor)
- What is the current sales tax revenue from county farms? (Data source: could an accounting firm be hired to gather this information from individuals and report to the farm bureau?)
- What many people are currently employed by local food production? (Data source: Department of Labor; Woodbury County, Iowa model)
- What are the current training opportunities for existing, potential or both existing and potential farmers? (Data source: community colleges, university extension programs)
- How many farmers markets or vendors are there currently (Data source: Survey)
- How much money do consumers currently spend on conventional versus non-conventional food? How might this change if the new amendment moves forward?
- How much money from the farmland protection program is currently spent on conventional versus non-conventional food? Is the proportion increasing? How might this change if the new amendment moves forward?

Taken as a whole, this list and the process that generated it were effective in determining whether an HIA would add value to the decision-making process.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is an important component of the HIA process. As health impact assessment practitioners, the county staff worked very hard to engage the groups directly affected by the policy decision. During interviews the county staff describe these efforts as largely successful.

The Kane County Farm Bureau played an essential role in the project. The project team engaged the Farm Bureau very early on. This is important because the farm bureau played an important role in the County's Farmland Protection Program at its inception. By ordinance, a representative of the farm bureau holds one of the nine voting positions on the County Farmland Protection Commission, so their active involvement was essential.

A great deal of their effort was directed at the agriculture community, especially the large established growers of traditional commodity crops. The Farm Bureau, in particular, was actively involved in many phases of the project. The President of the Farm Bureau was a member of the steering committee. Through their newsletter, *Kane County Farmer* and website, the Bureau kept their membership aware of the project from inception through the adoption of the final ordinance. The County staff saw their involvement as vital. The involvement of growers was very strong in the beginning. Their input was particularly strong early in the process. While many Farm Bureau members stayed involved throughout the process, many found it difficult to spend time as the growing season progressed.

Other groups that were successfully engaged and thought to have contributed to the success of the project were local food access providers such as Northern Illinois Food Bank. With their focus on getting healthy foods to the people who need them, their understanding of the importance of the project and the possible positive long-term effects of the availability of healthy locally grown food, is why they were such a strong partner. While some staff members thought more direct engagement of vulnerable populations would have been advantageous, most thought the NIFB's understanding and representation of their needs lead to effective representation of vulnerable populations in the HIA process.

When asked what other groups could have been engaged, several staff suggested that more could have been done to identify farmers who stood to benefit from the change in the ordinance, particularly new growers, and that participation from independent growers not associated with the Farm Bureau could have been beneficial. Other groups that could have been better engaged were consumers of fresh produce, meats, organic products such as patrons of farmers markets, corner stores, parents of schoolchildren, and restaurants that prepare and serve the kinds of products that would be produced. Others suggested that regional groups and organizations, outside of Kane County, might well have been included and engaged in the process such as large institutional buyers and restaurant groups given the emphasis on links to food procuring organizations through "Meet the Buyers" events and other economic impact considerations.

In terms of engaging elected officials on the County Board, particularly the Agriculture Committee, the staff thought that the efforts they undertook to keep them informed, even given the changes in Board composition after the November 2012 election in which half of the seats turned over, were effective and

lead to a high degree of awareness and participation. The Agriculture Committee, in particular, was seen as both engaged and an important link to the agriculture community through ties to the Farm Bureau. Members of the Agriculture Committee were also viewed as a source of direct input and expertise given their strong backgrounds in farming, agriculture and planning. The Agriculture Committee came into existence in January 2013. Recognizing the importance of agriculture in the county, the newly elected County Board Chairman created the committee. The HIA and proposed changes to the existing farmland protection ordinance were the first major issues addressed by the committee.

Recommendations

The recommendations given in HIAs take the form of evidence-informed actions that should be undertaken to achieve desired health outcomes. Recommendations should lead to policies that foster positive health outcomes while weighing and minimizing adverse impacts. They are the major outcomes of the HIA process. The eight recommendations of this project are summarized in Table 1 (pp. 5-6) of the final HIA. The HIA describes in detail the evidence, the sources of the evidence and the processes used to collect the evidence upon which the eight recommendations were based. Each recommendation follows a logical progression from multiple sources of information, that which was gathered during the scoping process (surveys, interviews, and public meetings), input from the Economic Impact Analysis conducted by the American Farmland Trust, the published literature, and feedback from the County Board, especially the Agriculture Committee. While they are not prioritized, the preeminence of the first recommendation, the creation of a companion ordinance to the current farmland protection law, is implicit. The remaining seven recommendations specify further actions necessary for the ordinance to achieve its desired effect. They included: creation of a food hub, linkage projects such as Meet the Buyer events, linking procurement organizations with local growers, the development of the *Grown in Kane* branding campaign among others.

The possible adverse consequences of changing Ordinance 01-67 were voiced by the Farm Bureau during a County Board Agriculture Committee meeting. The Farm Bureau's primary concern was that the ordinance's language remains size and production method neutral. Related to production, they wanted to assure that farms that sell these products should have equal opportunity to participate in the County's effort. While it was never the intent of the ordinance, Farm Bureau members were concerned the amendment would favor new growers over existing growers. Based on this feedback the proposed solution was a companion amendment to Ordinance 01-67. Rather than amend the existing Farmland Protection ordinance, a new one was suggested in order to keep the current program and its history intact and allow for more flexibility in funding. The interview participants generally agreed that Farm Bureau input helped ensure the best interests of local farmers were considered, all the while keeping in mind the ultimate goal of the new measure.

The process used to generate the recommendations and the recommendations given in the final HIA document reflects best practices in the field of Health Impact Assessment. The project team identified specific recommendations to manage the health impacts identified in the Screening and Scoping phases. They are clearly shown in Table 2 of the Health Impact Assessment Report. Alternative courses of action

were thoroughly discussed, modifications to the proposal were made based on feedback from people, groups and organizations from the community who were most likely to be affected by the proposed ordinance change. Particularly well thought-out and presented in Table 3 is an assessment of health outcomes thought to be directly affected by the ordinance change, the expected magnitude of the impact, and the quality of the evidence upon which the recommendations were made.

Reporting

In the reporting part of the HIA process, HIA practitioners disseminate findings to decision makers, affected communities and other groups and organizations with a request for feedback. This stage often results in a revised report that addresses public responses to the draft.

The evaluation team received extensive feedback from the County staff, Farm Bureau, County Board, and Northern Illinois Food bank related to the reporting phase of the HIA. All concurred that affected people, communities, groups, and organizations were given many opportunities to review and comment on the HIA findings. The project team presented the report to the Agriculture Committee, at a special meeting of the Farm Bureau, to the Farmland Protection Commission, and in other settings—members of the evaluation team were present at many of these meetings. Electronic versions of the report were directly disseminated to many potential people, groups, and organizations who had been engaged in the process. Feedback on the report was taken during public meetings, via email communication and through face-to-face meetings. It is clear that the recommendations were delivered to the relevant decision makers. Relevant people, groups, and organizations were able to use HIA findings to develop their position on the proposed ordinance and were able to communicate with their members using information contained in the report. Respondents indicated that the time allotted for feedback was adequate. The report was an effective means of forwarding the policy objectives of the project.

The reporting process reflected best practices in the field of Health Impact Assessment. In order to support effective, inclusive communication of the principal HIA findings and recommendations, the project team created a succinct summary of the HIA findings. The project team presented summary materials to the Farm Bureau, to the Agriculture Subcommittee of the County Board, and to the County Board. The Farm Bureau ran regular updates on the process, based on the material they were given by the project team in their monthly newsletter, *Kane County Farmer*. The project team rendered summary information into several presentations and skillfully presented them. Members of the evaluation team were present for a number of these presentations and observed that they were engaging and well received.

The HIA Project Process

The evaluation team conducted several assessments designed to identify essential elements of the project, as a whole, that contributed to its success during various phases of its implementation. Through interviews, direct observations of project activities, and evidence gleaned from communications and written documents, several important conclusions about the project became evident.

A consistent theme voiced by the many participants in the project is that early, broad, and consistent engagement of people, communities, groups, and organizations throughout the process was the most important element of its success. One respondent said that while the right groups were, in fact, engaged, there was a strong perception of openness and involvement and the perception was particularly important to the members of the County Board and Board subcommittees. Without broad involvement, the scoping step in particular would have been difficult. Members of the project team saw the scoping process as the most important phase, driving the entire process, but several respondents indicated that the screening and scoping steps were not unique activities and commented on them as if they were one set of activities. While the formal steps of the entire HIA process was identified as important, most of the essential substance of the final HIA report was generated during scoping.

The role of the HIA training and the technical assistance of the consultants was seen as another important element of the project. Several project staff stressed that particularly in the early phases of the project, input from the consultants was vital. Input from consultants later on in the process on specific topics such as research was identified as something that would have been beneficial.

Members of the project team identified challenges and pointed out specific opportunities for improvement. Several described difficulty in getting some of the groups and people in some of the organizations involved in the process to understand HIA and the HIA process. As the project went on, a stronger common understanding of HIA evolved, but it was slow to materialize. A related but distinct challenge was maintaining the interest and engagement of some of the parties affected by the project over the life of the project. During the eighteen-month duration of the project, interest ebbed and flowed. Several project team members suggested that a shorter faster moving process might be more effective. Since the project involved a change in a well-known ordinance, many of the groups engaged in the process knew the initiative as related to farmland protection and not as a health impact assessment.

Perceived Impact of the Project

The project team successfully conducted a high quality HIA. Results of the assessment were incorporated into supporting documentation to the proposed amendment, and presented to the Kane County Farmland Protection Commission as it formulated its recommendation to the County Board. The Growing for Kane ordinance (13-240) was approved by the county Agriculture Committee in July 2013, and approved by the full County Board at their August 13, 2013 meeting. While the long-term impacts of the project on the health and well-being of the residents of Kane County are not possible to assess in this report, shorter-term effects of the project are more evident.

Team members identified several positive benefits of the HIA process that extend beyond the project's stated objectives. Several indicated that partnerships developed during the project could be useful for future projects. In particular, the relationships with the Farm Bureau strengthened communication and trust between local government and the agriculture community and could help facilitate implementation of some of the HIA's secondary economically-focused recommendations such as

creation of a food hub, linkage projects such as Meet the Buyer events, linking procurement organizations with local growers, and the development of the *Grown in Kane* branding campaign.

Many team members commented on the lasting value of the HIA training and the improvement in the organizational capacity of the KDCSD and the KCHD to work together to systematically evaluate policy alternatives as a tangible benefit of the project. They felt that the process of identifying expertise in County government organizations involved and that in other community bases organizations was a stand-alone benefit that would make future projects easier to conduct. The capacity of the County staff to conduct HIAs was a clear benefit. The project was a tangible example of the importance of the relationship between land use and health. It increased awareness of farmland protection and served as an example of how farmland protection can enhance local food production. The HIA served as a means by which the County Board could find consensus. Some Board members seemed much more bought-in and enthusiastic about policy related to land use and health, and even about policy as a public health intervention in its own right. The Board's level of awareness of these issues was clearly improved. The HIA identified obstacles and challenges that were apparent and relevant to the HIA project, but that would likely exist outside the context of the HIA project. This being the case, the HIA project led to a road map around the obstacles as the Project teams addressed challenges.

There is evidence that the HIA process will increase the understanding of the health ramifications of policy decisions in the community as a whole. Several County Board members commented on the value of the project in this regard. Similarly, many of the county staff interviewed by the evaluation team thought that the project had the broad effect of raising public awareness. By focusing on a specific policy, the basic concept that health improvements can be brought about by policy changes will likely gain currency among county residents.

Finally, when asked if the HIA project was useful, every person interviewed thought it to be so. It solidified important relationships between the project team and the organizations most affected by the ordinance, it made the County Board aware of the value of systematic fact-based evaluation of policy options, and it reinforced the benefits of previous collaboration between the KDCSD and the KCHD particularly the Making Kane County Fit for Kids, Healthy Kids, and Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities projects.

E. Conclusion

The Kane County Farmland Protection Ordinance Health Impact Assessment project achieved its desired outcome. The Growing for Kane ordinance (13-240) was approved by the county Agriculture Committee in July 2013, and approved by the full County Board at their August 13, 2013 meeting. The new policy and program will help to address the county's growing obesity issues and low rates of fruit and vegetable consumption that affect health.

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