Prevention Research Center

The Prevention Research Center (PRC) at Tulane University studies the impact of the physical and social environments on obesity and collaborates with community partners through policy, education and communication strategies to build healthier communities in New Orleans and beyond. Founded in 1998, the Tulane PRC is one of 37 centers funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Our work is focused on healthy eating and active living.

HEALTHY EATING PROJECTS

CORE Research Project on Neighborhood Food Environment in New Orleans
The Tulane PRC’s core research project examines the food environment in New Orleans, seeking to document changes since Hurricane Katrina, how these changes affect access to healthy food, and the impacts of these changes on food consumption behavior. The core research is community-based and relies on specific interventions and natural experiments to study the changing food landscape in New Orleans and its impacts on residents.

Nutrition and Obesity Policy Research and Evaluation Network
The Tulane PRC is working in collaboration with the national Nutrition and Obesity Policy Research and Evaluation Network (NOPREN) to advance research on policy and environmental approaches to obesity prevention. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently created this network, which includes five PRC collaborating centers, several affiliated centers and CDC technical advisors, to help identify, evaluate and increase the adoption of such policies.

New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee
The Tulane PRC serves on the New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee (FPAC), an advisory body to the New Orleans City Council, which is made up of diverse members from the public, private and civic sectors. The PRC directed research and advocacy for an FPAC initiative to improve access to grocery stores, farmers markets and other fresh food retail outlets in neighborhoods. A second FPAC initiative is working to improve school food and child nutrition in a context that also supports local farmers.
ACTIVE LIVING PROJECTS

Physical Activity and Policy Research Network
The Tulane PRC is a collaborating center on the national Physical Activity and Policy Research Network (PAPRN). This network works to identify physical activity policies and determinants, describe the process of implementing policies, and determine outcomes of physical activity policies. The Tulane PRC will develop a community play index for playgrounds and schoolyards and test its reliability with network members. This will lead to a measure of ‘playability’ that can be incorporated into environmental design guidelines.

Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities
New Orleans is one of 50 sites nationwide selected by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities program. The PRC supports the KidsWalk coalition to increase the walkability and bikeability of New Orleans, particularly around schools.

Bike Lane Research
The PRC received a Rapid Response grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to study the impact of new bike lanes throughout the city on ridership and the number of right-way riders (moving with traffic). Cyclists and pedestrians are being counted and interviewed about trips including reasons for walking/biking before bike lanes are installed and after installation is complete.

Safe Routes to School Evaluation
The Safe Routes to School Evaluation Study is examining the attitudes and possible barriers to children walking or biking to and from school. In collaboration with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, the Tulane PRC has collected community and school-level information throughout planned sites in Louisiana. A post-test evaluation will be conducted as the Safe Routes to School sites are developed.

The Lafitte Greenway Evaluation
The planned restoration of the Lafitte corridor includes pedestrian and bike paths that will link 12 neighborhoods, parks, historic sites, retail areas and community spaces. The PRC received Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Active Living Research funding to conduct a two-year baseline evaluation of neighborhood residents’ physical activity levels before the renovation of the Greenway is complete.

Neighborhood Ambassador Program
In early 2011, the PRC launched its Neighborhood Ambassador Program to connect neighborhood groups to health-related resources and programs, depending on each community’s needs and goals. Support from the PRC includes providing skills to empower neighborhoods to initiate and maintain future health-related activities, including walking groups, health fairs, cooking demonstrations and community gardens.