

Active Living for a Lifetime

County and City Healthy Communities Profiles

A report by the NACo Center For Sustainable Communities and the United States Conference of Mayors



June, 2005

Dear Mayors and County Officials,

In the last twenty years, obesity and related health challenges such as diabetes and heart disease have risen to the level of a national epidemic, extending from America's largest cities and suburbs to its most rural communities. The economic costs associated with this explosion were estimated at \$117 billion in 2000 nationally, with much of that burden borne by local governments. The toll that it takes on human health and well being is practically incalculable.

To assist in creating healthy communities, the National Association of Counties' Center for Sustainable Communities and the United States Conference of Mayors have produced *Active Living for a Lifetime: County and City Healthy Community Profiles* to provide local government leaders with successful replicable strategies to improve their communities. Through these seven profiles, county officials and mayors can learn practical steps that they can take in partnership with the private sector, health practitioners, and community groups to help children, middle age, and older Americans live healthier, more fulfilling lives.

The decision to engage in physical activity is and always should be a matter of personal choice. However, through initiatives such as those presented in this report, local leaders will learn how they can assure that opportunities for physical activity are safe, accessible and available to all citizens of all ages.

We encourage you to take advantage of the resources and contacts the report provides.

Sincerely,

Angelo D. Kyle
President
National Association of Counties

Donald J. Plusquellic
President
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Active Living for a Lifetime: County and City Healthy Community Profiles

Introduction

Since 2003, the National Association of Counties and the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) have been working through the Center for Sustainable Communities in partnership with other state and local government organizations through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Active Living Leadership Program to promote the creation of communities conducive to active living.

Active Living is a way of life which encourages the accumulation of at least 30 minutes of physical activity into daily routines. Active Living Leadership has focused creating opportunities for a lifetime of physical activity by working on issues that affect the day to day lives of citizens including, bicycle and pedestrian security, neighborhood safety, transportation, school siting, planning and zoning.

In an effort to provide local leaders with examples of successful active living projects that they can replicate in their communities, the Center for Sustainable Communities has produced this case study publication. Working closely with NACo and USCM staff and members, the Center's research team interviewed local government leaders and community representatives and worked with them to present their community efforts to enhance healthy living for a lifetime.

Acknowledgements

This report could not have been produced without the guidance and information provided from DuPage County, IL, Harford County, MD, Erie County, OH, and Spartanburg County, SC, and the Cities of Austin, TX, Highland Park, IL, and Salt Lake City, UT. The information they provided was invaluable in the creation of this report.

The Center for Sustainable Communities would also like to thank the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation support and the full Active Living Leadership Team for their continued partnership. Managed at San Diego State University, the Active Living Leadership initiative is a partnership effort with the International City/County Management Association, Local Government Commission, National Conference of State Legislatures, National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, American Association of School Administrators, Council of State Governments, Local Government Commission, and the United States Conference of Mayors.

The report was written by Jared Lang, Center for Sustainable Communities Program Assistant, and Andrea Lasker, former Center for Sustainable Communities Consultant during the Fall of 2004 and Spring of 2005. Case study development assistance provided by USCM Assistant Executive Directors Crystal Swann, and Judy Sheahan. The report was edited by Martin L. Harris, Center for Sustainable Communities Director, with interior and cover design by Victor Montera, National Association of Counties Graphic Artist.

Recommendations for Local Leaders

Both NACo and the USCM are acutely aware of the significant challenges facing local leaders in implementing any new initiatives. Counties and cities are faced with serious budget challenges. Many of the key programs they rely upon are increasingly threatened, and they are being asked to provide greater levels of service with fewer resources to do so. Under these circumstances, reducing unnecessary health care costs is becoming even more important as much of that burden is borne by local governments. In recognizing this dilemma, the case studies provided in this report provide many helpful methods that require little to no new monetary contributions from the local government. Close reading of the profiles produces a series of recommendations that local leaders should at least consider as they are working to address the health challenges in their communities.

1. County officials and mayors should be proactive in establishing dialogues and partnerships with all local entities and citizens that can play a role to create a successful active living initiative—even in areas where they may lack direct jurisdictional authority such as school districts.
2. Question traditional assumptions about roles. It may take non-traditional partnerships to develop initiatives that help your citizens become more physically active. This may require a fresh re-examination of the function of your hospitals, senior centers, neighborhood associations, or schools.
3. Take advantage of resources provided by outside organizations. Many programs highlighted in this publication are partly funded by in kind donations from the private sector. Also, sample policies, programs, and case studies are often available for little to no cost.
4. Cooperation is key. Many local government departments do not cooperate, not because they do not want to, but because they do not realize their common interest in many issues. County leaders must use their oversight to foster cooperation.
6. Look for opportunities to retrofit existing buildings and transportation routes to allow for more physical activity opportunities. When examining redevelopment and infill decisions, be sure to do so with an eye towards assuring opportunities for physical activity—and be sure that your planners, builders, and developers do the same.
7. Keep a constant critical eye on land use regulations, and remove those that may inadvertently create barriers to physical activity opportunities.

Lessons Learned

Throughout the report, several key concepts or points of commonality kept recurring in the various profiles. Whether or not the program was from a larger or smaller community, or targeted towards children or seniors, these lessons remained fairly constant. Taken together, they can form a bit of a checklist for other elected, community, or private sector leaders seeking to create positive change within their community.

1. For many citizens, active living is an abstract concept that requires absolute resolve from local governments in order to create awareness. Citizens still often think in terms of traditional ‘exercise’ such as going to the gym. While doing so is great, and to be encouraged, that is not active living.

2. In order for citizens to get involved, they must have some kind of motivation. Time and again the case studies demonstrate the benefit of a central motivating force. Even if the reward or incentive is small, such as t-shirts, pedometers, or even a certificate from an elected official, programs were more successful when some kind of incentive was identified. This proved particularly effective in initiatives targeting aging Americans.
3. All of the successful programs profiled have dedicated, knowledgeable, and experienced staff. While many are not health ‘experts’, there was usually some sort of access to professional expertise.
4. Work within your government structure to encourage collaboration. Several of the programs profiled did not require new resources just increased cooperation and coordination across different departments.
5. Strong elected leadership is key. Use your bully pulpit to empower citizens. Let them know that ‘small’ changes in routine physical activity can make a big difference. If you are able to, lead by example by improving your own level of physical activity. Wear a pedometer. Walk to the office. Be visible in supporting healthy community activities.
6. Improving attitudes and behaviors concerning individual health requires changes on several levels—the individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and policy levels. The most successful outcomes create change at all levels.
7. Often, citizens do not understand the connection between their individual health and lessening the burden on their communities. This may not be a motivating factor for most citizens who are inactive, but it is for some. Many do not want to become a ‘burden’ to the government, the community, or their own family. Statistics and research help local governments illustrate these connections.
8. When implementing an active living initiative, local governments must have direct input from their citizens. People are fairly sensitive on this issue. Care needs to be taken to assure that any efforts to be planned or undertaken are done so in the appropriate way and with citizen buy-in. Interviews and surveys are excellent techniques to ensure the creation of a program that meets the needs of its citizens.



Erie County, OH: Serving Our Seniors, Master's Challenge

Community Profile

The City of Sandusky, located on 22 miles of Lake Erie shoreline, is Erie County's government seat and population center. It is noted for its beautifully landscaped parks, historic architecture, and the Bayfront Corridor. As of 2002, Erie County has a total population of 79,551, with 9.1% of its residents 65 years of age or older. The median income is \$42,340, with approximately 9.1% of total residents and 12.2% of children below the poverty line. In the City of Sandusky a significant percentage of residents below the poverty line are either very young or very old, with 22.7% under the age of 18 and 10.2% 65 and older. A bit over 50,000 residents live in the urban areas of Erie County, with the rest living in rural Erie County. "The New Rating Guide to Life in America's Small Cities" has chosen the Sandusky "micropolitan" area as the sixth best small city in America.

Situation

Much of Erie County is rural. Often, citizens in rural areas are highly dependent on automobiles to access economic and social lifelines in the community. In Erie County those who do not drive face an increasing challenge to remain connected to social lifelines. Therefore, in 1996 a group of concerned community volunteers came together to create solutions to the difficult circumstances affecting older, less mobile adults having trouble getting around in rural parts of the county. The volunteers realized that immobility and increasing disconnectivity threaten the health and wellbeing of older residents. Therefore, a key focus of their project is creating an active living community.

Strategy / Implementation

As a first step, the volunteers formed a coalition called the Save Our Seniors Committee, devoted to improving the quality of life for older residents. The committee placed a levy on the ballot (The Erie County Senior Services Tax Levy) to fund the new organization, which passed by an overwhelming majority. Serving Our Seniors opened its doors in December 1996 as a local non-profit organization conceived to serve both the healthy and frail, and promote senior citizen independence.

Serving Our Seniors hired Sue Daugherty as its Executive Director, who possesses a background in gerontology and was able to use her abilities to raise awareness of the impacts of physical inactivity on senior citizens. She communicated the burden that the senior population might impose on the community if their level of activity did not increase in order to find support for the program activities.

They initiated a program called The Master's Challenge to introduce seniors at all levels of fitness to a variety of physical activity and exercise opportunities including facilities and clubs in the area.

Since 1999, Serving Our Seniors has sponsored the Masters Challenge in cooperation with area agencies. The program promotes positive aging by giving the elderly opportunities to be active and making active living part of daily life. The Toledo Senior Citizens Olympics competition was used as a model for setting up the Masters Challenge.

The events under the Master's Challenge program are open to all Erie County residents ages 60 and over. Amateurs are welcome and no experience is necessary to participate.



Events include Croquet tournament, Eight-Ball tournament, fishing derby, wheelchair obstacle course, canoeing, water walking, basketball shoot, baseball throw, Golf, a five kilometer walk/run, and a one mile walk.

Serving Our Seniors sponsors the Aging with Attitude Clinic. At the clinic participants ages 60 and over go through a self assessment obstacle course designed by the local hospital's physical therapy and occupational therapy departments. The purpose is for participants to be able to evaluate their own fitness level and compare themselves to their peers. The goal is that participants will become motivated to make changes in their behavior and improve overall health. Currently, Serving Our Seniors is planning a new "For the Health of It" clinic to build on the public's awareness of physical fitness issues in later life.

Partners

Partners include the City Recreation Department, YMCAs, the Ohio Veterans Home, Erie County Running Club, and the County Conservation League. Serving Our Seniors coordinates and funds all the promotional activities, and the partners are responsible for sponsoring the events.

Leadership:

Erie County Commissioner Nancy C. McKeen plays a vital role in the promotion of the Master's Challenge program. As a member of Serving Our Seniors' Board of Trustees, her leadership and support has made many local leaders and county residents realize the critical role the program plays in Erie County. As a result, the county government provides funding on an annual basis and continues to offer a platform for promoting these efforts. Ms. Daugherty works closely with Commissioner McKeen and the board to coordinate activities throughout the community.

Outcomes

Relationships with partner organizations have strengthened over the years, and as a result, the program's momentum is growing. Beside the Master's Challenge activities, the program now incorporates numerous outreach efforts. Notably, the program maintains an extensive mailing list in order to notify supporters and participants of upcoming events and new information.

Most importantly, new programs have been spun off due to the success of Serving Our Seniors. The Firelands Running Club used the Serving Our Seniors mailing list to help introduce the "Turtle Pack," geared toward elderly runners. The group of slower joggers and willing walkers reach out into the community and encourage new members to join. The Sandusky Recreation Department has also set up a shuffleboard league. Currently, shuffleboard is gaining such popularity amongst seniors that the city plans to add shuffleboard courts to numerous parks around the city. In collaboration with Erie Metro Parks, other activities are in development in 2005, including the forma-

tion a Badminton Club and a Horseshoe Club.

There are also plans to add new events to the Masters Challenge 2005, including archery. Serving Our Seniors, in partnership with the Erie County Conservation League, will host an "Introduction to Archery" course to prepare competitors for the event. Each year the number of participants increases. In year one there were 15 competitors, and in 2004 there were approximately 125. To accommodate all the participants, the event has grown from one day to five days. The County is taking advantage of the positive momentum by developing new ways to expand the program and include more residents.

Lessons Learned

When Serving Our Seniors was in the development stages, the county found it difficult to demonstrate to its residents why programs specifically aimed at engaging seniors in sports, fitness, and recreation should be supported. The general public finds it difficult to make the connection between senior health and lessening the burden on their community, and often seniors do not appreciate the role that active lifestyles can play in improving their lives. Therefore, counties need statistics and research available to justify community intervention to help create a healthy community that supports active living for all ages. When faced with difficult obstacles, a successful program's value is too great to give up. According to Sue Daugherty, persistence is the key to ultimate success. Her mantra in guiding Serving Our Seniors has always been, "Don't give up! Don't give up! Don't give up!"

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City of Austin, TX: Steps to a Healthier Austin

Community Profile

Austin, the capital of Texas, is the fifth largest city in the State with a population of 683,551 within the city limits and 1,249,763 in the greater metropolitan area. It is home to the University of Texas at Austin, as well as numerous local, state, and federal government agencies and advanced technology companies. The city is well-known for its natural beauty, which boasts greenbelts, athletic fields, golf courses, tennis courts, a veloway, hike and bike trails, a bike lane system, a youth entertainment complex, recreation and senior centers and several swimming pools.

A number of organizations have recognized Austin as a great place to live and/or work. In October 2004, the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department received the National Recreation and Parks Association's 2004 Gold Medal Award as the best parks and recreation system in the nation. In 2004, Forbes Magazine listed Austin as one of its "top ten places for business." In its "2003 Crime in the U.S" report, the FBI placed Austin the third safest city among cities with a population of 500,000 or more with respect to violent crime. However, financial, educational, recreational and healthy lifestyle opportunities are available to many residents of Austin and Travis County, certain segments of the population within Austin face challenges with respect to socioeconomic opportunities and significant health disparities.

Situation

The Steps to a HealthierUS program is a cooperative agreement funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Steps to a Healthier Austin (SHA) is the local initiative under the national program. SHA is a five-year, multilevel community-based intervention designed to reduce the burden of diabetes, asthma and obesity by improving nutrition, increasing physical activity, and decreasing tobacco use.

The SHA intervention area includes 20 contiguous ZIP codes that encompass the eastern half of Austin and Travis County. This area contains 167,000 households for a total population of 460,041, of which 41% are Hispanic and 14.2% are African American. Eighty-three percent of the region's African Americans live in the intervention area, and one third of the intervention area population speaks Spanish. In 2004, the median household income was \$42,689, approximately 40% lower than in other parts of Austin and Travis County.

The total mortality rate for the intervention area is 22% higher than the non-intervention areas in Austin and Travis County. There are significant racial/ethnic health disparities in the intervention area. In fact, African Americans have higher mortality rates from heart disease, hypertension, cerebrovascular disease, and diabetes compared to Caucasian residents. Hispanics and African Americans are 2.5 times more likely to die from diabetes than Caucasians.

The Steps intervention area population also has a high level of diseases and chronic illness. Among the adult SHA intervention population, an estimated 12% have doctor-diagnosed asthma, 7% have been diagnosed with diabetes, 55% of the population is overweight and 26% are obese. The chronic disease results in higher hospitalization rates among the SHA population, compared to the rest of the county for asthma complications, short-term and long-term diabetes complications, congestive heart failure and hypertension. A greater percentage of the adult SHA population is also at risk for developing chronic conditions from modifiable lifestyle and behavioral choices. Overall, 21% of the adult Steps population smokes cigarettes, which increases the risk for numerous cancers, heart and respiratory diseases. Twenty-six percent of adults report no leisure time physical activity in the past month, which is a significant risk factor for obesity, heart disease, and respiratory complications. And only 25% of adults in the SHA intervention area meet the 5 serving minimum recommended daily consumption of fruits and vegetables. Poor nutrition places individuals at risk for developing similar chronic conditions.

Strategy / Implementation

To address asthma, diabetes and obesity through tobacco prevention and cessation, improved nutrition and increased physical activity, SHA has partnered with a number of key organizations within the intervention area. Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department (HHSD) is the lead agency for the SHA initiative. Together with other city departments, school districts, and community partners, SHA seeks to impact change at the individual, interpersonal, organizational, community and environmental levels through targeted disease-specific and population-specific interventions and marketing campaigns. In collaboration with the SHA program staff, these organizations have been working to implement active living strategies that have resulted in a multitude of community changes.

A unique approach to address each of the six strategy areas; asthma, diabetes, obesity, smoking, physical activity and nutrition, has been the formation of workgroups of individuals from the partner agencies. Thus far, the product from each of the workgroups has been an approach for producing community changes at all ecological levels, specifying stakeholders, resources, programs, methods and strategies, and target populations. Among other advantages, this process has facilitated the integration of partner programs, creating buy-in and sharing of partner activities.

Two partners, HHSD Chronic Disease Prevention Program and the Mayor's Fitness Council, are spearheading physical activity initiatives that have resulted in a multitude of community changes.



HHSD Chronic Disease Prevention Program, along with members from AmeriCorp VISTA, lead the Walk Texas! program. Walk Texas! is a 10-week challenge to help people become more physically active. Program components include training volunteers to be group leaders, providing support for community walking groups, offering incentive plans for group leaders and participants, and producing the Active Austin Guide, which lists free or low-cost physical activity resources in the City of Austin and Travis County. Since 2002, 168 walking groups have been formed with over 1,200 members. Currently, over 50% of participants continue to walk regularly as a result of their experience with the 10-week challenge.

HHSD Chronic Disease Prevention Program also collaborates with the American Heart Association (AHA) to implement the Walk Texas 10-week Challenge in 10 African American churches, with the goal of making the walking groups self-sustaining. AHA's Search Your Heart program is designed to empower African American churches with tools to promote nutrition and physical activity in order to reduce death and disability from heart disease, the number one killer of African Americans in Austin. In addition, over 10,000 copies of the Active Austin Guide have been distributed to local libraries, businesses, community-based organizations, churches, the Austin Housing Authority, Parks and Recreation Department, and residents. New collaborations have also been formed with community groups and neighborhood associations to promote physical activity by creating walk events.

The Mayor's Fitness Council (MFC), a group recruited by Mayor Will Wynn and comprised of a number of Austin and Travis County community leaders, is committed to making Austin the "fittest city in the US" by increasing physical activity and improving nutrition in Austin. The MFC created the Walk a Mile campaign, a program designed to promote awareness and increase physical activity opportunities. Community level strategies include an annual Mayor's Fitness Walk, posting Mayor's Mile Markers at key locations, developing a city-wide facilities inventory and map highlighting locations for physical activity, marketing participation in physical activity-oriented events (over 75 annually), using existing communication vehicles to promote physical activity and nutrition messages, and conducting a community-wide inventory of trainers and training options. Organizational-level strategies include posting mile markers within various sports facilities, and partnering with organizations. It also promotes a worksite wellness campaign in the Mayor's Office, area grocery stores, and for large employers. Potential new programs include creating corporate physical education departments within participating employer sites.

Leadership

SHA is implemented by its core staff and partners under guidance from an executive leadership team and a consortium of community participants. The executive leadership team includes the Director and Medical Director of the HHSD, the SHA Program Manager, and representatives from SHA partners. The consortium includes leaders from the private sector, school districts, faith-based organizations, and local and state level governments. SHA staff and the executive leadership team have also engaged decision makers at the city and county level for input and direction into the project, and SHA staff has regularly updated community leaders on the progress of SHA activities.

Outcomes

The SHA consistently conducts program evaluations, monitoring community actions and changes. Community actions are defined as actions that bring about a new or modified program, policy or practice. Examples of community actions are letters, e-mail exchanges, phone calls and town hall meetings. Community changes are new or modified programs, policies or practices that are brought about by the action of SHA partners or staff.

To date, there have been a total of 48 community actions and 52 community changes related solely to physical activity. The graph below depicts the rise in community actions and changes since the beginning of the initiative, in September 2003. Some examples of community actions and changes have been shared previously, and also include creating new health and exercise programs within the Parks and Recreation Department's 13 recreation centers existing day camp curriculum, generating resources for incentives to promote physical activity through foundation-sponsored grants, creating social marketing messages to promote physical activity and the Walk Texas! program.

The SHA evaluation plan also includes community level measures of physical activity and nutrition derived from a Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey and Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance Survey. In addition to measurable outcomes, other outcomes include increased collaboration between area organizations; increased coordination of activities and services between City of Austin departments, such as Parks and Recreation, Community Care Services (patient clinic system) and HHSD and other community-based organizations; heightened media attention and increased awareness regarding the issues surrounding obesity, diabetes, asthma, and health disparities; and greater input and volunteerism from community members for addressing chronic diseases in the intervention area and Austin overall.

Lessons Learned

The SHA initiative is a novel collaboration between non-profit organizations, city and county governments, school districts, churches and private agencies. The resources required for success include dedicated, knowledgeable, and experienced staff. Though a mix of general and grant funds were necessary for some programmatic activities, for the most part, new programs and activities were largely the result of planning, coordination, and collaboration between partners and city/county departments and did not require direct monetary resources. In fact, in-kind contributions from partners easily equaled, if not exceeded, actual funding amounts. As a group, partners created a vision, mission, and action plan that resonated with community members and decision makers.

Leadership at the highest levels of city and county governments, as well as within organizations, was critical to the success of our program. Identifying and engaging community leaders to promote or adopt new programs is critical to the success of the initiative. Among other things, the program staff learned that in order to make long-lasting changes, collaboration between individuals and organizations from diverse sectors of the community is critical. Also, creating changes in health behaviors and outcomes requires changes on several levels—the individual, organizational, community and policy—and the most successful outcomes result from changes on all these levels.

Future plans include expanding the initiative into new school districts, recruiting other large employers and small businesses to participate in SHA activities and programs, and conducting targeted social marketing campaigns to improve nutrition and increase physical activity.

Current Steps partners include the following organizations:

- City of Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department
- City of Austin/Travis County Chronic Disease Program
- City of Austin/Travis County Community Care Services Department
- Austin Parks and Recreation Department
- City of Austin Mayor's Fitness Council
- Austin Independent School District
- Pflugerville Independent School District
- Manor Independent School District
- American Cancer Society
- American Lung Association
- Austin Asthma Coalition
- American Diabetes Association
- American Heart Association
- Sustainable Food Center
- Family Connections
- KLRU Public Television
- Capitol Metro
- YMCA
- TKO Advertising
- Kansas University Work Group
- Texas Department of State Health Services

A list of the consortium members is below:

- Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Capital Area African American Chamber of Commerce
- Austin Independent School District
- University of Texas School of Nursing
- Austin Travis County Mental Health and Mental Retardation
- Sustainable Food Center – Austin Community Gardens
- Texas Cooperative Extension Service
- Austin Parks and Recreation Department
- Austin Community Care Services Department
- Trust for a Smoke-Free Texas
- American Cancer Society
- American Heart Association
- Huston Tillotson College
- Austin Housing Authority
- Capital Metro
- Trans Texas Alliance
- YMCA
- Austin Inter-Faith Alliance
- American Diabetes Association
- American Lung Association
- Austin Health Connection
- Health Ministry Team Churches
- Texas Department of State Health Services
- Run-Tex

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DuPage County, IL: DuPage County Trail System

Community Profile

DuPage County, Illinois has been experiencing rapid growth over the past twenty-five years, with its population almost doubling and employment opportunities expanding. This growth has fueled the demand for developable land for residential, commercial, office and industrial use. The result has been the rapid disappearance of undeveloped land in the county.

In 2003, over 36% of the county's total land was devoted to residential uses.

The percentage of land devoted business has increased from 3.1% in 1990 to 8.3% in 2003. This is indicative of the job growth occurring in the county over the last decade, as it has emerged as a major economic engine for Northeastern Illinois.

DuPage has done a great job growing its residential and business base, while still preserving the open space that helps define the community. In fact, while employment opportunities and land devoted to business development have increased, DuPage has also increased the percentage of its land classified as open space (from 17.7% in 1990 to 19.6% in 2003). Local elected leader insightfulness enables Dupage to create a plan for growth that preserves open space through development controls, setting aside environmentally sensitive lands, and acquiring land for natural resource preservation and recreational uses.

During the 1990s, Dupage's population grew 15.7%, reaching a total of 924,589 people by 2002. Its growth was matched by a corresponding increase in ethnic diversity. Minorities accounted for most of the population increase. However, the county's population is also aging, with residents age 65 years and over comprising almost 10% of the county's population.

Situation

The Dupage County trail system began in the 1960's with the Illinois Prairie Path, the first rail to trail conversion in the United States. At the same time, land use planning designated growth nodes and large open spaces along stream corridors. Over the next decade, officials began to realize the value of incorporating their open spaces into the community by linking them together. Citizens and leaders recognized multiple benefits associated with the integration and utilization of their open space, providing wonderful opportunities to enhance non-motorized transportation for business and recreational purposes. As a key component of the integration plan, in 1996, the county revisited the DuPage County Regional Bikeway Plan (which was originally passed in 1984) and began to incorporate roads and trails into a regional network connecting citizens to their communities and open spaces.

The network includes local and regional multi-purpose off-road trails and paths and designated on-street facilities such as bicycle routes and lanes. The purpose of establishing the network throughout DuPage is to improve non-motorized travel in the County, as well as provide recreational and health benefits that



maintain the high quality of life for citizens. Many of the existing connectors are off-road trails like the Great Western Trail and the Illinois Prairie Path. Others are located along neighborhood streets, which allow easier mobility and access to shops, community centers, and places of worship. These changes allow residents to engage in physical activity as a more routine part of daily life. The trails and bikeways also allow easier access to municipal parks and county forest preserves. In total, DuPage County has 242 miles of routes, trails, and paths, including lanes designated for bicycle and pedestrian travel.

Strategy / Implementation

The DuPage County Regional Bikeway Plan was integrated into the regional 2020 long-range transportation plan for the entire Chicago region. The long-range plan solidified the importance of pedestrian friendliness and opportunities for incorporating physical activity into the daily routines. These components were included at the front end and incorporated right along with more ‘traditional’ planning issues, such as housing, environmental protection, and business development.

Funding for the study was provided by the Illinois Department of Transportation and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Block Grant Program. Funding for implementation has been procured through state and federal grants and provided by local and countywide agencies. The DuPage County Regional Planning Commission collaborated with over 90 organizations to do their analysis of current bikeways and trails and develop a new plan. Study participants included:

- DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference/DuPage municipalities
- DuPage County Division of Transportation
- Northeastern Illinois Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC)
- Illinois Department of Transportation
- Will County



- Surrounding regional councils of mayors
- DuPage park districts
- DuPage County Forest Preserve District
- Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS)
- Kane County
- Cook County
- Local and regional trail and bikeway citizen groups

CATS and NIRPC are regional coordinating agencies that consulted on the plan and provided regional transportation expertise. IDOT is the statewide agency responsible for managing the regional transportation systems. The NIRPC headed up regional coordination with surrounding cities and counties to make sure that connections were strengthened, capitalizing on inter-

connected services and amenities.

As a result of the County's foresight, even more people are recognizing the need to combat health issues. In fact, in a recent local news article County Health staff reported that obesity was the number one health issue facing DuPage County. The County maintains a significant focus on daily living approaches to physical activity and community efforts.

Leadership

County leaders involved in the effort provided the crucial input for the program's success. In particular, County Board Chairperson, Robert J. Schillerstrom, has initiated many activities and assisted with securing funding support. Thomas F. Bennington, Jr. and James D. Healy, County Board Members have also been avid supporters, utilizing their bully pulpit through presentations at public meetings, providing intergovernmental coordination, working with other public and regional partners, and actively looking for sustainable funding sources.

These leaders have benefited from the work of dedicated program staff and a well developed plan, derived from the input of a variety of public, private, and community stakeholders.

Outcomes

Citizens are beginning to incorporate trail use into their daily routines, and they are providing feedback on the effectiveness of the system. Citizens tell stories about how walking on the trails is benefiting their personal health. Citizens are now requesting more links to places they would like to be able to access without cars. The connectors are public facilities that everyone is beginning to take advantage of, regardless of their age, income, race, or previous level of physical activity. The trails provide a critical resource by connecting citizens to their community resources and providing diverse opportunities for active living, and several new regional trails are currently in development.

Overall, as a result of the intense focus on health and mobility issues within the region, there is a growing recognition that much of the infrastructure and required facilities for promoting physical activity are already available, and more efforts are planned for the future that will continue to enhance the quality of life of citizens within the region.

Lessons Learned

Programs that seek to coordinate extensive trail systems require community involvement, from the planning stages to the implementation phase, and when promoting the system. It is crucial to have people working closely with the implementation agencies through groups and other formats that provide direct citizen input. Implementing a traditional public awareness campaign using press releases, news stories, and public meetings is essential to educate citizens and keep stakeholders engaged. Ongoing efforts are needed to sustain citizen involvement in the program. It is essential to develop a clear plan that outlines a vision for the future and gives citizens something to look forward to.

Some replicable keys to DuPage County's success include:

1. Leadership and support from the chief elected officials at the top of your government.
2. Hands-on involvement and leadership by those working "in the trenches" on project details.
3. A dedicated staff charged with producing results and empowered to do so.
4. A solid plan developed through the participation of a broad range of regional stakeholders that outlines a long range vision for the future and practical steps to achieve that vision.
5. Active and sustained public involvement in planning and implementation by the general citizenry and interested stakeholders, and a clear and accessible process by which to secure it.

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Salt Lake City: **SLC Gets Fit Together**

Community Profile

Salt Lake lies in a mountain valley with the Wasatch Mountains to the east and north. The Oquirrh Mountains border the western edge of the valley. 182,000 people live in Salt Lake City, and 1.4 million people live in the entire metropolitan area. In 2003 Salt Lake had a per capita personal income of \$29,699, and 71.5% of Salt Lake City residents own their homes.

Salt Lake combines the amenities of a major metropolitan area with the friendliness of a small, western city. Hosting the Olympic Winter Games of 2002 enhanced the community's profile as a world-class travel destination, while showcasing Salt Lake as an unspoiled, family-friendly destination.

The Utah Transit Authority (UTA) provides over 100 bus routes throughout an 1,800 square-mile area. The UTA also provides light-rail service, airport transportation, service to ski resorts in winter, and door-to-door transportation for disabled passengers.

Situation

Reports on the "obesity epidemic" in the United States, attribute the burgeoning waistlines of millions of Americans to our increasing sedentary life style. The consensus among health experts is that many of us need to increase the amount of physical activity we engage in on a daily basis. According to the American Academy of Family Physicians nearly 59 million adults are obese, and the percentage of young people who are overweight has more than doubled in the last 20 years. Fifteen percent of Americans aged 6–19 years are overweight. In response to the increasing obesity problem, Salt Lake City has developed SLC Gets Fit Together, a city-wide fitness challenge to get those who live and work in Salt Lake City, up and moving.

Salt Lake City is taking necessary steps to improve the residents' health. The first step was to design a fitness challenge for city employees, and test it with a smaller group before launching the city-wide

campaign. In December 2004 the participants in Salt Lake City Gets Fit Together Employee Challenge were off and walking. Sixty-four teams of 10 employees each participated in a 13-week walking-for-fitness challenge. The program is designed to raise awareness and increase citizens' physical activity level through walking. SLC Gets Fit Together is an invaluable component of the city's effort to make Salt Lake City a great place to live, work, and "walk."

Strategy / Implementation

SLC Gets Fit Together is a 13 week program designed to get people active in the community. The basis for the program is the use of pedometers by participants to measure the number of steps they take each day, with a goal of at least 10,000 steps per day. Participants are also allowed to convert other physical activity such as bike riding, swimming, etc. into steps.

The program is a competition, with teams of five competing for the most steps overall and greatest improvement from their first week of increased physical activity.

During the first week of the 13 week program participants wear their pedometers and go about their daily routines. This week is called their "baseline" week. It is designed to measure the amount of activity they do on a normal basis. During the next 12 weeks participants actively work to increase the number of steps they take. Prizes are awarded to the winning teams. Thanks to support of the Salt Lake City Marathon, each team member gets a free pedometer, t-shirt, water bottle, and flashing lights for walking at night.

Each year the challenge kicks off with SLC Gets Fit Together Week. During the kick off week, participants are encouraged to try, at no-cost, health and fitness activities at participating health clubs and fitness centers in the city.

SLC City Gets Fit Together is promoted through the media. Stories in local newspapers and on local TV stations have resulted in almost 2,000 people participating in the most recent events.

Partners

Most of the work on the program has been done by Salt Lake City, with support from the following organizations:

- American Heart Association
- Intermountain Health Care
- Subway
- Public Employees Health Plan
- Healthy Utah
- Utah Walks
- Altius
- The Salt Lake City Marathon (they donated 2,000 pedometers, t-shirts, water bottles and flashing lights)

The portion of SLC Gets Fit Together directed at city employees is funded in part by the city's health insurance program. The overall SLC Gets Fit Together program is funded by generous in-kind contributions from the organizers of the Salt Lake City Marathon.

Leadership

Mayor Rocky Anderson developed the idea for the fitness program under his active living initiative, which is a city-wide health, economic, and beautification program. The idea was eventually implemented by a team of city employees from the following divisions:

- Transportation
- Human resources
- Mayor's Office
- Community Affairs
- Information Management Services (web page)
- Youth programs
- Public Services

By involving a cross section of city employees from multiple departments in the planning process, Salt Lake City was able to develop a very successful program that has been well received by the community.

Outcomes

By any standard, SLC Gets Fit Together is a success. The program is so well-liked by citizens that other jurisdictions are developing their own programs based on Salt Lake City's model. Participants are learning from the program and making longterm changes in their daily routines. Many are losing weight, and they are showing a new commitment to fitness and walking.

The city's partnership with the SLC Marathon is gaining strength. They see our program as a natural way to promote their event. Health providers have been very supportive of the program. They understand that promoting healthy communities is in their financial interests. Prevention is less costly than treatment.

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City of Highland Park, IL: **Wellness For Life**

Community Profile

Highland Park is geographically situated in Lake County, IL; along five miles of beautiful Lake Michigan shoreline and just 26 miles north of downtown Chicago. Just above 31,000 residents inhabit the city. Median age in the year 2000 was 40.6 years, reflecting the city's significant elderly population.

The downtown business district, a focal point for shoppers, has won many awards for its creative design. The city has received two national volunteerism awards, earned a Presidential award for excellence in education, has eight times been cited as a Tree City, USA, and has received gold medals for its Park District. Involved residents have truly created an atmosphere of community pride.

Highland Park is a vibrant community that offers an unusual wealth of beautiful parks, recreation facilities, and individual centers for youth and seniors. The Park District maintains about 600 acres of parklands, including three parks located on Lake Michigan and the beautiful 96 acre Heller Nature Preserve. Modern Metra commuter trains travel to and from Highland Park twenty-five times a day. An express ride to Chicago takes just over 30 minutes from any of the four stations in the community and O'Hare International Airport is 18 miles away. Highland Park is well-situated city for success.

Situation

The City of Highland Park has been committed to wellness and health promotion for seventeen years. It began a pilot program in 1987, and in 1990 the program grew in scope, enabling the entire city staff to enroll in a self-insured health plan. The Wellness For Life program is a multi-faceted program that embodies the wellness vision; that is, the "feeding" of the body and mind with activities that promote well-being and assist the body in preventing disease. The city has nine focus areas that "feed" program participants: 1) education, 2) motivation, 3) fitness, 4) nutrition, 5) screenings, 6) smoking cessation, 7) ergonomics, 8) risk identification, and 9) community education and programming.



Strategy / Implementation

Wellness For Life

Education is the primary focus of the program. Without understanding “the why or how,” a person cannot motivate themselves to make change in their lives. Highland Park uses soft and hard educational programming to achieve success.

The soft education programs do not require direct teacher/student interaction. For example, three times a week employees receive thought provoking quotes or health facts via email. Once a month they receive self-care emails. Past emails have explained how to combat the flu, new exercises, and ways to make small, but positive changes in daily life. Besides email, patrons receive a bi-monthly, eight-page newsletter, covering healthy facts, recipes, activities, and general wellness information. Another soft education program is a health risk appraisal questionnaire to identify health risks. If risky behavior is identified, participants receive information concerning that health risk.

Hard education programs are instructor based education sessions. Friday Morning Public Works Health Class has

helped reduce the public works injury rate from 28% in 1992 to less than 4% in twelve years. In this program instructors discuss job ergonomics, health and self-care issues, and injury management; the class is mandatory and meets twice a month. The city also offers health specific exercise classes, such as Qigong activity classes and Fit & Fun Exercise Classes. The Way To Be Is Smoke-free is a free smoking cessation program open to all city employees and family members. Approximately one-third of all participants successfully quit smoking.

Highland Park stresses fitness. On-site fitness facilities and satellite fitness centers allow program patrons to exercise in comfort and with guidance. Patrons must obtain a physician release form and must participate in a physical fitness assessment, which is based on the Cooper Institute of Aerobics Research fitness tests. Once assessed, employees receive a personalized program and membership to a fitness facility. As an incentive, the City’s wellness coordinator updates each patron’s fitness plan on a daily basis to make his or her fitness center experience more productive. Fitness plans are accessed every two to four weeks and adjustments are made.

Highland Park’s effort also stresses nutrition. They perform nutritional analyses and make appropriate recommendations to optimize fitness. Without knowledge and guidance success is rarely achieved; that is why the city believes in stressing both fitness and nutrition.

Screenings are another part of wellness promotion programming. Quarterly, the city performs voluntary on-site blood pressure measurements for all employees, and if a person’s risk stratification deems them borderline hypertensive, the employee receives intervention information and reminders to have it checked over the following three months. The city also provides annual on-site ultrasound vascular screenings and workstation ergonomic analysis. In all, new employees are given ergonomic workstation screenings and adjustments to reduce potential repetitive stress injuries. All employees receive a review every two years. The city believes that effective healthcare involves regular screenings to catch problems in the early stages of their development.

Healthy Highland Park Task Force

Wellness for Life efforts are not only for city employees. The City has created the Healthy Highland Park Task Force. The program’s mission is to improve quality of life and health for all Highland Park residents by increasing awareness and education, and participation in health, fitness opportunities.

The program promotes community-wide activities to raise awareness of the healthy opportunities available to residents. Twenty-four educational sessions are set up throughout the year to teach everything from exercise to diabetes to disease prevention, as well as offering free cholesterol screenings to 750 people and two follow-up sessions. Residents that are identified as moderate to high-risk receive counseling sessions. Currently, the task force is performing a public health study with the Center for Outcomes, Research, and Education of Evanston Northwestern Healthcare studying lifestyles, health practices, and expectations. The study will enable the city to evaluate the effects of its ongoing efforts and retool its programs to better meet the needs of its citizens.

Leadership

City leaders involved in the effort provided crucial input to the success of the program. In particular, Mayor Michael Belsky has initiated many of the activities and assisted with securing funding support. Dr. Robert Manfredini, D.N. (City of HP, Serenity Health Resources) is the coordinator of the city's active living program. Dr. Lynne Belsky, Ravinia Associates, provides Dr. Manfredini with support. Staci Weiss from the Park District of HP has also been active in presentations at public meetings, providing intergovernmental coordination with other public entities, and searching for funding sources. Hania Fuschetto from Highland Park Hospital and the Center for Outcomes heads the study designed to assess the effectiveness of the city's active living program.

Outcomes

It is the City's goal to help all city employees and residents to become as healthy as they can be. The effort has not only improved citizen health, but Highland Park's fiscal health as well. In 2001 the city saved the \$63,000 by performing in-house orthopedic evaluations and exercise-therapy. By focusing on preventing health problems, the city is saving itself and its residents thousands of dollars per year.

Lessons Learned:

Wellness is a path that can be littered with distraction. Wellness for Life and the Healthy Highland Park Task Force provide the maintenance and guidance to put residents on the path toward better health and quality of life, and provide them with consistent support.

The city has found that no matter how much education it offers, residents must be motivated to make changes. For this reason, the city offers two incentive programs. The Prevent & Prosper Program allows employees to reduce their next year's insurance deductible by performing biennial physicals with cholesterol, blood pressure, and body composition exams, and completing health risk appraisal questionnaires. Our Fitness Bonus Hours Program allows employees to earn time-off for maintaining or achieving a specific level of fitness. The city has learned that if individuals are not motivated, nothing can be accomplished. Thus, providing incentives to create motivation is a key to its successful active living program.

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Harford County, MD: Harford Active Life

Community Profile

Harford County, Maryland is located in the northeast corner of Maryland, just northeast of Baltimore. The suburban county is a mixture of rural farms and hamlets, small towns and suburban residential communities. In 2004 the population was 233,340, with twenty-seven percent of that population age 50 and over. The county's average household income is \$73,380, and the unemployment rate is 3.7%. Harford is a very solidly middle class county.

Situation

The Harford County Office on Aging observed that health statistics in their senior population showed signs of increased rates of diabetes and heart disease. As a result, county leaders formed a coalition of community organizations to identify barriers to becoming a healthier community, and then and develop initiatives to overcome these barriers. The coalition concluded that a

program to increase physical activity among seniors would greatly benefit their health and the health of the community.

Strategy / Implementation

In January 2004, to help support their efforts in assisting older residents, the Harford County Office on Aging submitted a grant proposal to the National Blueprint Mini-grant program created by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

A primary focus of The Harford Active Life program was to established partnerships with health, aging, transportation, and private sector organizations, to harness their multiple perspectives, expertise, and resources to address barriers to increasing physical activity among older adults.

To begin the process, a series of brainstorming sessions were held. The barriers identified were: 1) Lack of knowledge about existing opportunities for routine physical activity, 2) Negative perception about "exercise", 3) Lack of motivation to become more active, 4) Lack of transportation, 5) Cost concerns, 6) Fear of pain or injury through activity.

Program partners include

- Harford County Office on Aging (Area Agency on Aging)
- Harford County Department of Parks & Recreation (recreation program)
- Upper Chesapeake Health (community hospital)
- Harford County AARP Community Councils (chapters of AARP)
- Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (volunteer center for senior citizens)
- Harford Cable Network (community access channel)
- Healthy Harford (coalition of governmental and community organizations promoting a healthier community), Bel Air Athletic Club (area health club)
- Times of your Life newspaper (newspaper for seniors)
- Harford County Transit (bus system), and
- Harford Community College (community college).

Upon grant approval, the Harford County Office on Aging staff implemented the Harford Active Life program. The program was developed to provide incentives to citizens who participate in a number of physical activities.



A brochure was developed to inform seniors about the program, and includes information on special events taking place during the year, ongoing activities at senior centers, recreation programs, and health clubs, presentations to businesses, and a resource directory. Parks & Recreation sites and health clubs were solicited to assist in the implementation of the program.

Each participant receives a step counter to log the number of steps they walk. Special prizes provide seniors incentives to increase their physical activity. When a participant completes ten activities, they receive a tee-shirt. After twenty activities, they receive a hat. After thirty activities, they receive a sweatshirt. For more than forty activities, they earn a jacket.

The program was kicked off at the countywide Senior Picnic on June 18, 2003, Seniors were given opportunities to participate in a variety of activities, such as walking and dancing, to earn their first credits toward the Harford Active Life program.

A couch potato game was used to draw interest and emphasize the importance of being physically active. At the Independence Day Parade in Bel Air, July 4, 2003, Harford Active Life debuted the Harford Active Life Couch Potato in order to raise community awareness for the program and stress the importance of increasing physical activity.

In January 2004, Harford Active Life coordinated a countywide Open House at eight area health club facilities, welcoming seniors to tour the facilities and learn about the programs and activities geared toward them.

Beginning that January, the Harford Active Life Fitness Show began broadcasting on Harford Cable Network. The half-hour show features destinations around the county to go and engage in physical activity. Walking trails, health club programs, and fitness classes are among the highlighted program. Each show includes an interview with a senior who provides a testimony on how keeping physically active promotes wellness and happiness. Each month viewers get tours of health clubs, senior centers, and recreation programs. Information for getting involved is also provided, and monthly fitness tips educate seniors about how to make step-by-step changes in their lives.

In May 2004, during Older Americans Month, the program encouraged walking with Seniors on the Move, a program that provides incentives to encourage walking. Each senior center distributed walking logs and step counters, enabling citizens to log their steps. When participants submitted their log, they were given a fanny pack. The seniors who walked the most, by age categories, received a gift certificate for new shoes from a local store.

Leadership

Carol Lienhard, Administrator of the Harford County Office on Aging was the catalyst for Harford Active Life. She is responsible for coordinating the coalition of agencies and community groups that conduct the program, and she oversees the grants and hires staff.

Other coalition members include:

- Paul Yanney, Chief of Recreation of Harford County Parks & Recreation. Mr. Yanney facilitates cooperation between recreation staff and the program.
- Sandy Eanes, Executive Director of Harford Cable Network, who provides the technical staff and support for the monthly fitness show.
- James Massey, coordinator of Program and Resource Development. Mr. Massey oversees program implementation in the senior center and health club network. He also developed the concept for the fitness show.

Outcomes

Over 500 individuals are participating in the program and have recorded over 12,000 activities. The program is receiving very positive feedback from participants. Although the more active seniors were first to register, and first to wear their Harford Active Life tee-shirts, hats, and sweatshirts; many less active seniors are following and beginning to participate. Even seniors using walkers are picking up pedometers and logging steps.

Community support for the program is strong. Sources funding the program remain constant, and enthusiasm is building. The program's relationship with local health clubs is becoming stronger. Recently, health club instructors were contracted to expand the range of senior fitness classes they offer.

Lessons Learned

- Incentives are key. Many seniors love the giveaways as much as good health! Tee-shirts, hats, sweat shirts, fanny packs, and tote bags are fun, relatively cheap incentives.
- Funding for incentives is important. Area health agencies and businesses can also be funding sources.
- Cooperation of agencies and organizations is essential to the success. Healthy Harford, a coalition that works to improve community health, was most useful in supporting this program.
- Most importantly, changing behavior on large scale takes a multiple partnerships. Making the public aware of the problems associated with inactivity is paramount for a community's wellness program, and then assembling the stakeholders to help make change can assure its success.

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Spartanburg County, SC: **Greenways, Trails and Bicycle Corridors,** **Partners for Active Living**

Community Profile

Located on the edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the City of Spartanburg (pop. 39,673) is the seventh largest city in South Carolina. Until the textile industry's decline in the mid-1990s, Spartanburg was one of the primary Southern textile towns and a key railroad hub for the Southeast region. Today, it is emerging as the region's premiere "college town." In fact, Spartanburg has the highest per capita college student population of any major South Carolina city, with six colleges and universities. It is also home to a thriving business community, with large international companies such as BMW Manufacturing Inc. and features a newly revitalized urban core with businesses such as Extended Stay America, and QS/1.

While planners expect Spartanburg County's population (257,262) to increase by 110,000 by 2030, the City of Spartanburg's population is steadily declining. Currently, there are 16,695 households in the city limits. The median household income is \$22,423. The city is diverse. Its residents are about 49.5 percent Black/African-American and 47.1 percent White/Caucasian.

Overall, the county and city are thriving, but they are facing several significant challenges, particularly related to citizen health issues. According to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, Spartanburg County ranks in the top third of all counties in the state for people with heart disease. This is particularly disturbing considering that South Carolina has the ninth highest cardiovascular disease (CVD) death rate in the nation, and CVD risk factors such as diabetes and high blood pressure are prevalent in the county. Currently, 56 percent of Spartanburg's adult population is classified as overweight and 87 percent do not engage in regular physical activity.

Situation

Spartanburg County's physical design and development patterns pose real challenges to allowing citizens to incorporate physical activity into their daily routines. An October 2002 study by Smart Growth America identified Greenville-Spartanburg as the fifth most sprawling metropolitan area in the US. Characteristically, sprawling communities provide low levels of pedestrian convenience and accessibility to homes, workplaces, schools and shopping areas. Sprawl is also associated with poorly connected, unsafe, and unfriendly pedestrian walking places. Spartanburg County has all of the problems that come along with sprawl. Spartanburg is one of the state's five worst counties for motor vehicle collisions with pedestrians and cyclists. The majority of collisions take place within city limits, in daylight, and involve victims under the age of 16.

However, Spartanburg has many well-loved and accessible open spaces, parks and traditionally designed neighborhoods. Downtown neighborhoods such as Converse Heights, city green spaces like Cleveland Park and Duncan Park, and many of the area's six colleges and universities offer excellent active living opportunities, but there is little connectivity between these spaces.

In response to these challenges, the county and local groups have developed several projects addressing active living issues. In 1999, a local, private health foundation, the Mary Black Foundation, provided funding to two organizations to address challenges related to creating a community more conducive to active living. The Palmetto Conservation Foundation (PCF) received a three-year grant to create a county-wide, public-private task force focused on greenways, trails and bicycle corridors. PCF is a statewide, nonprofit membership organization that works on projects and policy initiatives to conserve natural areas, preserve historic landmarks, and promote active living. Another organization, Partners for Active Living

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Strategy / Implementation

The County's involvement in active living programs began when the Community and Economic Development Department formalized its partnerships with Palmetto Conservation Foundation and Partners for Active Living. The relationship builds on successful collaborations on integrating health issues into the overall livability vision for the region. In winter 2002 the county partnered with Palmetto Conservation and other local organizations to conduct a two-day conference bringing experts from around the country together to teach local policymakers about the connections between economic development, public health, and the built environment.

The Spartanburg Area Transportation Study (SPATS), the transportation arm of the county's Metropolitan Planning Organization, brought things together at policy level by incorporating active living issues in their new Long-Range Enhancement Master Plan. The ambitious 20-year plan provides a funding blueprint for a series of transportation and mobility initiatives that support active living, including community greenways, bicycle routes, and traffic calming features. The SPATS Policy Committee, the decision-making body, is planning several "smart" road projects to increase connectivity, safety, and opportunities for physical activity in the routines of daily life.

The County Council is also examining a "big box" initiative that will evaluate regulatory steps to limit the number of abandoned, large-scale retail outlets and encourage better incorporation of shopping and retail opportunities into the county's development strategy. The City of Spartanburg is currently considering new sidewalk and landscape buffering requirements in all new development. Many council members have been active at smart growth conferences, including the last three New Partners for Smart Growth national gatherings, gaining education on how to incorporate active living into community design and planning efforts.

Partnerships:

In addition to working within the government structure, the county has extended their partnerships to their regional Metropolitan Planning Organization, the City of Spartanburg, foundations, and private sector organizations. Some of the organizations involved have included:

- Mary Black Foundation: a private hospital conversion foundation with assets of over \$80 million
- Palmetto Conservation Foundation: the statewide non-profit membership organization focused on conservation, preservation and active living
- Partners for Active Living: a community-based initiative that advocates and pursues the creation of activity friendly environments
- PRIDE Task Force: a private organization focused on city clean-up and beautification
- Spartanburg Area Conservatory: a local land trust
- City of Spartanburg Planning Department
- Spartanburg County Parks and Recreation
- Spartanburg County Historical Association
- Noble Tree Foundation
- Graffiti Foundation
- Men's Garden Club
- Upstate Forever

A majority of these partnerships and strategies were initiated in 2001 and 2002. Although funding came from a variety of sources, the Mary Black Foundation was the first major public-private partnership. Its grant making priorities focus on two areas—one of which is “active living” initiatives, and has already committed \$3 million to active living activities. Additionally, the county's transportation committee and SPATS are funding many new greenways, including a “rails-to-trails” conversion in downtown Spartanburg, and several new safer, pedestrian friendly roads.

Leadership:

Many county leaders have been involved in the regional effort, bringing leadership and intergovernmental coordination. They include:

- Jeff Horton (County Council Chairman, speaker Partnering for Prosperity, attendee of 2003 New Partners for Smart Growth conference, first vice-chair of SPATS policy committee)
- David Britt (County Council Member)
- Jim Hartmann (County Administrator)
- Chris Story (Assistant County Administrator)
- Elena Rush (Department Head, Community and Economic Development)
- Mike Garrett (Department Head, Public Works Department)
- Jim D'Amato (Senior Transportation Planner)
- Lisa Bollinger (Intermodal Transportation Planner)

Outcomes:

Although Spartanburg County does not have zoning, the public has increasingly shown concern with the way in which the county is growing. In summer 2004, the Spartanburg Herald-Journal newspaper and WSPA-TV conducted a survey (“Voice of the Voter”) to coincide with the upcoming elections. It showed that 83 percent of county citizens want to manage growth and protect neighborhoods, and 70 percent believe that the county government should enact zoning codes. Also, showing their frustration with the prevalence of large, abandoned retail facilities, 80 percent responded that county and city governments should take action to address that problem.

Spartanburg County has acquired a variety of tools and resources to assist efforts. Local leadership has shown its commitment by investing resources in active living. As a result, local officials and committee members have acquired a better understanding of how to create an environment that allows citizens to be more active, and partnerships were developed to bring expertise and more resources. The partners have done their homework acquiring successful case studies as educational tools and helping the city implement new programs. PCF and the partners are constantly conducting studies to analyze the effectiveness of their bike and pedestrian programs.

Lessons Learned:

- Create a grassroots plan. Soliciting participation and support from a broad range of stakeholders is the key to the ultimate acceptance and success of strategies and action plans.
- Identify the roles of stakeholders, advocates, and resource groups, and allow them to focus on what they do best. This process requires time for the acquiring of, knowledge of each participant's capacities and strength and the building of trust between all participants.
- Lay the groundwork for the project in advance so that necessary funding sources are identified; even if the funding itself is not secured. If counties address funding issues early, they will be prepared to make progress in a reasonable time frame. While complete funding is not necessary, work should be done to secure enough to begin to make progress on some of the recommendations. Projects do not move without funding.

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CENTER for SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES
County Leaders Building Partnerships for a Livable Future

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

The Center for Sustainable Communities' primary mission is to provide a forum for county leaders to work with other governments, the private sector, and communities to develop policies and programs that will lead to economic enhancement, environmental stewardship and social well being -- the three pillars of sustainable communities. The Center helps local elected officials build sustainable communities by promoting community leadership initiatives, facilitating multi-jurisdictional and public-private partnerships, providing technical assistance and training, and conducting community policy and educational forums.

The Center provides local elected officials with assistance in using policies and tools necessary for creating sustainable communities. In particular, local elected officials are interested in finding more cost-effective and comprehensive ways to address such issues as transportation management, brownfields revitalization, environmental protection, housing, energy conservation, job training, health, and public safety. To this end, the Center provides technical assistance, training, sustainable development literature and materials, and funding toward community visioning.

Through a six year partnership with the United States Conference of Mayors focusing on sustainability and regionalism, the Center worked closely with America's cities in addressing economic, environmental, and equity issues, producing an extensive library of technical assistance materials to address the challenges facing local governments. While the Center is not a repository of all relevant information on sustainable development, with its access to public and private sector leaders nationwide, it is a catalyst to help local government officials find solutions to problems facing their communities.

For more information about the Center for Sustainable Communities and its programs, please contact:

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This report was produced with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Hosted by San Diego State University, the Active Living Leadership initiative is a partnership effort with the International City/County Management Association, Local Government Commission, National Conference of State Legislatures, National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, American Association of School Administrators, Council of State Governments, Local Government Commission, and the United States Conference of Mayors.

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