



HEALTH CARE DIVISION

COMMUNITY CENTERED PREVENTION

Funding Interest: Opportunities for Physical Activity

Since 2010, the Trust has invested millions in our broadly-defined Community Centered Prevention issue area. In order to have an even greater impact, we are refining our focus to three primary funding interests: *Opportunities for Physical Activity*, *Access to Healthy Foods* and *Comprehensive Prevention in a Community Setting*.

Looking Forward: ***Opportunities for Physical Activity***

Opportunities for Physical Activity: Efforts to improve the built environment to promote walkable, bikeable communities. Strategies will provide greater access to parks, playgrounds, playing fields, trails, sidewalks, and other infrastructure changes, coupled with complementary policies and programs to encourage physical activity by community members of all ages.

What and Why? Access to opportunities for physical activity creates particular challenges for many North Carolina residents who live in underserved and rural communities. Long distances between communities and commercial centers encourage the use of automobiles for transportation and discourage walking and biking. When residents of rural communities want to be more active, the absence of safe, quality spaces for physical activity nearby may limit their ability to do so. In rural communities, the scarcity of sidewalks, bike lanes and recreational spaces, along with poor traffic signage and lighting, can create additional barriers. Providing context-appropriate alternatives, especially for financially disadvantaged populations living in rural areas, can increase residents' access to opportunities for physical activity. Many of these strategies can be implemented with slight modifications to existing environments.

The Research. A significant body of evidence demonstrates the link between improvements to the built environment and increases in physical activity. Creating safe walking, biking, and public transportation options for rural residents can help build a more livable, accessible community for people of all ages, abilities, and income levels."¹ For example, "roads surrounded by agricultural use may be 'complete' by simply providing wide shoulders to allow safe bicycling and walking and providing connections to regional trail and public transportation networks."²

The development of new walking/fitness trails or the improvement of existing ones is another way to provide increased opportunity for physical activity. "Well-connected trails provide residents with access to existing community destinations and is a low-cost intervention that reduces some barriers individuals face in being physically active—cost, inconvenience and inaccessibility."³ A 2007 study of planning directors and residents of 67 North Carolina counties showed that "more sidewalks, bicycle lanes and trails, more walkable, mixed-use development and strong planning policies were associated with higher levels of physical activity."⁴

Parks, playgrounds and play spaces are also important community assets that can help increase physical activity. The total park area within a community has been identified as a significant predictor of increased

physical activity levels among children. A recent study showed that for each 1 percent increase in park area, there was a 1.4 percent increase in physical activity levels.⁵

Specific Strategies to Increase Opportunity to Physical Activity

There are a number of strategies that can create greater access to parks, playgrounds, playing fields, trails, sidewalks, and other infrastructure changes, coupled with complementary policies and programs to encourage physical activity by community members of all ages.

We will consider proposals that address any of the following strategies:

- *Walking and biking*: Strategies to promote walkable/bikeable communities, advocate for Complete Streets policies including bike lanes and sidewalk connectivity, trail development, bike-share programs, Safe Routes to School, walking school buses, community walking groups and pedestrian-friendly crossings.
- *Parks and play spaces*: Renovation of existing parks, playgrounds and play spaces or newly developed spaces.
- *Shared facilities*: Shared-use agreements to maximize use and open access to existing community assets (gyms, pools, playing fields).
- *Physical activity promotion*: Promoting physical activity in school, preschool and at afterschool programs and advocacy efforts for institutional policy changes where needed for successful implementation.

We understand that specific communities and organizations may have unique situations or may wish to adapt one of the strategies listed above.

To learn more about the Trust's funding interests, grant cycles and application deadlines, visit www.kbr.org.

References:

^{1,3} ChangeLab Solutions. 2014. On the Move - Safe Routes to School Policies in Rural School Districts.

http://changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/SRTS-Policies-Rural_School_Districts-FINAL_20140611.pdf.

² Smart Growth America. National Complete Streets Coalition. 2014. <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/implementation/factsheets/rural-areas-and-small-towns/>

⁴ Aytur S, Rodriguez D, Evenson K, et al. "Promoting Active Community Environments through Land Use and Transportation Planning." American Journal of Health Promotion, 21(4S): 397-407, March/April 2007.

⁵ Roemmich J, Epstein L, Raja S, et al. "Association of Access to Parks and Recreational Facilities with the Physical Activity of Young Children." Preventive Medicine, 43(6): 437-441, 2006.
