

Active Living Logan Square

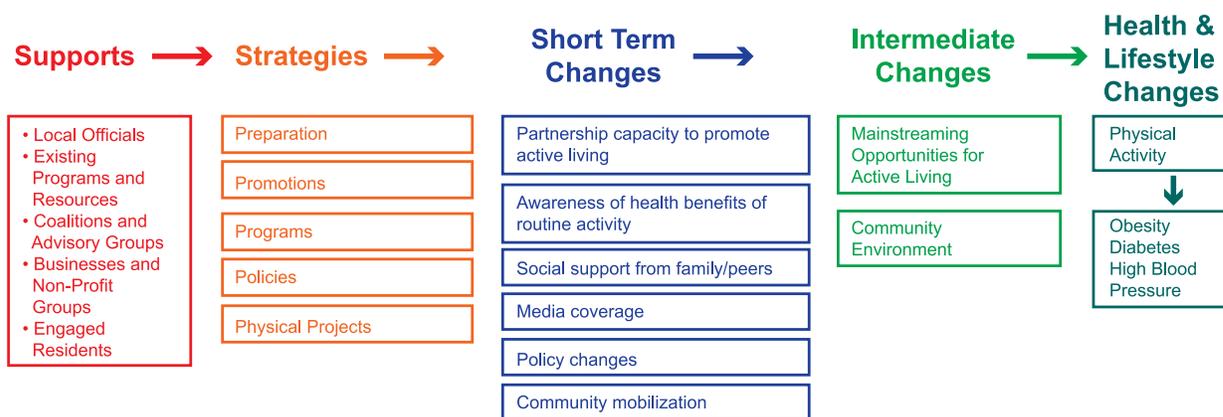
Evaluation of Active Living by Design | Chicago, Illinois | 2003-2008

On a late summer morning in Chicago, Illinois, thousands of residents from five diverse neighborhoods gathered for “Open Streets,” a community event that temporarily closed roadways to motor vehicle traffic. Residents were invited to walk and roll down an eight mile path dotted with activities, ranging from crafts and sports to giant games of checkers and live music. The event was part of Ciclovía, an international movement to embrace public space in ways that promote good health, civic engagement, and economic development. After three years of planning, a group of organizations and individuals with a strong commitment to active living in Chicago finally saw their vision come to fruition.

“Active living” is a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines in order to accumulate at least 30 minutes of activity each day. In November 2003, the Illinois Health Education Consortium, University of Illinois at Chicago College of Nursing, and Logan Square Neighborhood Association received a five year, \$200,000 grant as part of the Active Living by Design national program (www.activelivingbydesign.org) funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. By advocating for changes in community design, specifically land use, transportation, parks, trails, and greenways, the Active Living by Design initiative made it easier for people to be active in their daily routines.¹

The Active Living by Design Community Action Model provides five active living strategies to influence community change: Preparation, Promotions, Programs, Policies, and Physical Projects. The 5Ps represent a comprehensive approach to increasing physical activity through short-term, intermediate, and long-term community changes. This inclusive model allowed the Active Living Logan Square partnership to involve a variety of stakeholders in the development and implementation of affordable, accessible, acceptable, and sustainable activities for families and children.

Active Living by Design Community Action Model



The opportunity to engage in the Active Living by Design (ALbD) initiative encouraged influential individuals and organizations to collaborate with each other and increase community success for supporting health and active living. Key to the success of the partnership was a full-time project coordinator with strong community ties who helped cultivate relationships within the partnership and the community. In addition, the partnership maintained a flexible work plan that allowed for the use of culturally relevant strategies and the integration of complementary opportunities across sectors and settings (e.g., schools, parks, trails, streets).

¹ The Active Living by Design (ALbD) initiative was established by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) in 2001, and its National Program Office (NPO) is part of the University of North Carolina Gillings School of Global Public Health in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Twenty-five interdisciplinary community partnerships were selected across the country to demonstrate how changing community design can impact physical activity. Transtria was funded by RWJF to work with the NPO to conduct ALbD evaluation and dissemination activities. This case report draws from Transtria’s evaluation efforts.

“We became aware of Active Living by Design [and began to] look at how we could focus on a particular community and look not only at the issue of health per se but to also look at it from a broader perspective of businesses, parks, recreation, policies within school systems, architectural issues...” -Partner

“Active Living by Design has created an opportunity for people who aren’t necessarily communicating to communicate and focus on something.” -Partner



Logan Square

Logan Square, a community on the north side of Chicago, Illinois, was historically a community of Eastern European and Middle Eastern immigrants. In the 1970s, the neighborhood experienced an influx of Latinos, mostly of Puerto Rican and Mexican descent. By 2003, the majority of the nearly 100,000 residents were Latino, and many spoke only Spanish. Caucasians, African Americans, and Asians comprised the remainder of the population. Logan Square experienced many other changes in the decade before receiving the ALbD grant, including a decline in the availability of public transportation, changing demographics (i.e., an increase in young adults and families), decreasing availability of affordable housing, decreasing access to community resources, and increasing gang violence, obesity, and health disparities.

Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA), a community organization seeking to address these issues and empower the community to create change, partnered with the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Nursing (UIC) and the Illinois Health Education Consortium (IHEC) for the ALbD grant. Their goal was to use a community asset-based model to create an environment that promoted and supported physical activity. Specifically, the partnership aimed to:

- expand, strengthen, and maintain existing partnerships to promote active living;
- increase community awareness of the health and other benefits of active living;
- increase access to and availability of diverse opportunities for active living;
- enhance public policy and organizational supports for active living; and
- improve and beautify neighborhood parks and environments to support active living.

Through Active Living Logan Square, partners developed and implemented a variety of physical projects, policies, programs, and promotions. These strategies built on and overlapped with a significant amount of preparation work to initiate and maintain effort over time. Although their primary focus was schools and children, the entire community benefited from their efforts to integrate physical activity into the daily routines of individuals and families. The Active Living Logan Square partnership’s activities are described in this brief, including staff, partner, and community resident descriptions of the impacts of ALbD and the strong leadership that emerged during the grant period.

“What we really got out of [ALbD] is great local leadership. Kids, parents, community organizers, citywide allies, advocates... People who care about this issue.” -Partner

Preparation

“Whoever you want involved in your project, bring them together and talk about what it is you think you’re doing. Will it work for them? What are their concerns? What do you need to plan for? I think that’s key...” -Partner

Partnership

Prior to the ALbD grant, the Illinois Health Education Consortium (IHEC) and the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Nursing (UIC) had a long history of working in Chicago communities. IHEC was created in the 1970s to promote interaction between educational institutions and community-based health stakeholders. Through IHEC, the University of Chicago health professions colleges trained their students in community-based settings to encourage graduates to work in underserved areas. UIC collaborated with IHEC to develop Chicago Health Corps, an AmeriCorps project comprised of student and community residents working towards improving quality of life and creating healthier lifestyles through non-traditional medical interventions.

Recognizing the need for a strong community partner, IHEC and UIC invited Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) to join them as a core partner on the ALbD grant. For over 40 years, LSNA worked in the Logan Square neighborhood uniting institutions and residents to improve and preserve Logan Square as an excellent place to live, work, play, raise children, run a business, and worship. LSNA offered strong partnerships with businesses, schools, and organizations throughout the community, an extensive knowledge of the community’s needs, and an established, trusting relationship with residents.

“[LSNA] is well established in the community and we have credibility. We have a track record. We have 40 member institutions, so I think when trying to launch new initiatives and new programs that we don’t have to start from scratch.” -Staff

“[LSNA] was able to bring together key partners who had helped from the very beginning and were very important. It brought in as part of that partnership some of the other partners that are in the community, such as the public schools.” -Partner

Each of the three core partners fulfilled different roles within the partnership. IHEC served as the lead agency and fiscal agent and was primarily responsible for administering the grant. UIC provided faculty experts to assist with project needs, such as a health economist to assist with statistical analyses of project data. UIC and LSNA identified additional resources to support the partnership’s work. UIC was responsible for generating reports on partnership activities. IHEC and UIC College of Nursing worked mostly behind the scene. LSNA led the day-to-day implementation of key strategies and served as the primary contact for the partnership. Both UIC and LSNA identified opportunities and submitted proposals to supplement the ALbD grant. IHEC and UIC College of Nursing valued and relied heavily upon LSNA’s judgment and opinions because of its history and relationship with the community.

“I don’t think that there was any one organization that dominated the setting of the objectives. We probably gave greatest deference to the LSNA and their ideas and what they had in mind, and I think that was primarily because it is a mistake for us to make assumptions about what the community needs without talking to the community and getting feedback from them. We went through that process as we were preparing those objectives and then we actually had a series of meetings with people in the community that LSNA helped arrange so that we could get feedback from them on what the interests are and where we thought some of the priorities might be.” -Partner

A significant challenge during the early months of the grant was defining the partnership and roles of the core partners. Each had different priorities for the yearly work plans and opinions of where to focus their efforts. In order to be effective, the three core partners had to be willing to compromise. By recognizing the common goals and maintaining communications about their differences, the core partners were able to reach mutually beneficial solutions.

“We have really different roles and it’s a bit of a challenges to stay together and roll ahead on the same page... There’s just challenges of communicating about [different organizations’ priorities] and coming to agreements so that we all stay on the same page. I think that we’ve done okay at that, but it just has been something that we’ve needed to communicate about.” -Staff

“An example is coming up with our work plans and budget for the following year. We may see that we need to do another evaluation survey to see where we’ve come, but it may be that from a program perspective, LSNA was [planning to] spend that money on something else, so we need to talk about the value to be gained if we spend the money this way or what’s to be gained if we do that. I think that’s kind of the nature of collaboration. You are not always going to have the same priorities but if you both have the same ultimate goals, then you can fit together on how to reach them.” -Staff

After the ALbD grant was awarded, other organizations were asked to join the partnership, based on existing relationships, similar interests and goals, and potential to contribute to the partnership. Partnership members were encouraged to join the advisory groups or boards of other partner agencies as a method of becoming engaged in one another’s work and solidifying the partnership. It also allowed for increased reach and influence of active living principles as well as a certain degree of accountability among partners.

Community input was regularly used to structure the partnership activities. For example, the initial name of the partnership was Project New Vistas. Because many community residents felt that this did not accurately reflect the partnership, the name was changed to Juntos + Activos = Somos Saludable (Together + Active = We Are Healthy) and then changed once more to Active Living Logan Square.

Active Living Logan Square partners identified several strengths of working within the partnership:

- A strong community-based agency provided connections to other community groups and organizations.
- Partners were sincerely dedicated to working within the community, honoring their commitment and continuously seeking new opportunities in and for Logan Square.
- Core partners were already established in the community and had a history of working with the community.
- Community institutions participated unselfishly.
- Community residents showed consistent and enthusiastic support for the partnership’s activities.
- Leadership shared similar life experiences with the target populations.
- Government leaders were often responsive to the needs of their community.

“We just don’t come in and get people excited about something and then leave them hanging or walk away. We try to honor the commitment and continue to bring resources for something that we got people excited about. Otherwise, you lose a certain level of integrity.” -Staff

“Some of the effectiveness of working with parents in the community has not only to do with trust, but also sharing their life experience. You come from the same community, and you’ve been through the same thing, so people identify with you, and they look at you as a role model. I think that’s a big factor.” -Community member

“The leadership our training has provided to the residents and the parents really does pay off, because these parents are the ones going out there knocking on doors, talking to people, and creating that awareness.” -Community member

Staff, partners, and community members also identified a number of challenges to implementing the Active Living Logan Square work plan:

- Community change was a slow process.
- A significant time investment was needed to create sustainable change.
- Certain work plan activities had to be eliminated in order to complete others.
- Partners were often working on several projects at once and had competing priorities.
- Partners’ level of involvement was often dependent on available funding; for example, some partners did not have dedicated staff for partnership activities because there was no funding to support them.
- With a large and diverse partnership, it was often difficult to keep everyone informed about all of the partnership activities.
- Some partners received more community recognition for their efforts than others.
- Some organizations or individuals received credit for others’ work.
- Staff had to carefully consider how to educate the community by developing an understanding of how health is viewed within different cultural contexts.
- Some teachers, school administrators, and other school staff were uncooperative or uninterested.
- There were several instances when the partnership adapted its goals to accommodate complex social, political, cultural, and safety issues.

“One of the things I learned the hard way is that when we create a work plan that’s too tight and opportunities present themselves that you didn’t expect, something has to give. For instance, I spent a lot of time on two major funding sources and it was very time consuming. Something in my work plan had to be somewhat sacrificed in order for me to pursue that funding opportunity.” -Staff

“Working in a community, you have to get to the point where it is not crucial that you own everything [or receive credit].” -Staff

The table below lists the partners involved in the Active Living Logan Square project.

Members of the Active Living Logan Square partnership	
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicago Health Corps • Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children • Illinois Department of Public Health Healthy Schools Campaign • Illinois Health Education Consortium* • University of Illinois at Chicago <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - College of Nursing - Partnership for Health Promotion
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicago Public Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ames - Central Office - Funston - McAuliffe - Mozart - Nutritional Services
Parks & Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openlands • Trust for Public Land
Urban Design, Planning & Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicago Department of Transportation
Community Leaders, Policy- & Decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicago City Council Alderman
Other Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicago Police Department • Community Alternative to Policing • Mayor's Office of Special Events
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Transportation Alliance (formerly Chicagoland Bicycle Federation) • Seven Generations Ahead
Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bears Manufacturing • Logan Square Chamber of Commerce • West Town Bikes
Community & Faith-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afterschool Matters • Corporation for National Service VISTA (AmeriCorps) • Friends of the Bloomington Trail • Logan Square Neighborhood Association • Purple Asparagus

*Organization that served as lead agency during the ALbD grant period

Leadership and Champions

“We have wonderful resources but we have to have someone to galvanize, to be a catalyst, to bring all the pieces together, and I think [the Project Coordinator] plays that role here.” -Partner

Partners identified the ALbD Project Coordinator as the champion of active living in Chicago. From the beginning, she was a catalyst in the community and pulled people, resources, and activities together to produce change. In addition, she was a Latina living in the Logan Square neighborhood, which helped the community grow to trust and respect the ALbD project.

“[The Project Coordinator] had a leadership quality about her and a “get it done” quality about her from the very beginning. Everything that I saw about her after we worked on it and were getting the project started and everything I’ve heard since confirms that she has been the glue that has really kept a lot of the partners and programming together and made it work.” -Partner

Active Living Logan Square initially planned to share power and responsibility equally among the three core partners. However, the ALbD grant required that they select a lead agency to assume primary responsibility for the grant. IHEC was chosen to be the lead agency, and the IHEC Executive Director fulfilled the Project Director role, overseeing administration of the grant. The Project Director position has since been filled by multiple employees at IHEC. Over time, the Executive Director of IHEC felt that the administrative burden was too great, given the small amount of money designated for the management of the grant. Moreover, IHEC experienced a high rate of turnover in the position of Executive Director/ALbD Project Director.

“RWJF did provide a really very small amount of money and I must say that our agency, in terms of time and resources that we collected for fiscal management, was much more than what RWJF provided. Partially because they required us to participate in so many calls and discussions. It was beyond our time. It doubled the money. The way they explained it to us was that they are the catalysts to start this process and they expected that that small amount of money would draw in other partners and draw in other funding sources and bring that activity to the forefront in the community.” -Staff

Project staff agreed that having a professional organization as the lead agency was beneficial in terms of supervising and coordinating the project. While LSNA provided invaluable support, they did not have the capacity to administer the grant initially. Later, as their ability increased, LSNA took on a larger role in the grant administration.

Most of the staff members who worked with Active Living Logan Square were employed by LSNA, including the Project Coordinator. Staff of UIC and IHEC also worked with the partnership, but LSNA staff were responsible for ensuring completion of most project activities. AmeriCorps/VISTA workers, who were parents and community residents, assisted the Project Coordinator with projects and activities. Some of their tasks included:

- recruiting and training volunteers for the Walking School Bus;
- leading Take 10! activities in classrooms;
- teaching nutrition classes to school children through a RWJF Healthy Eating by Design (HEbD) grant; and
- assisting with delivering healthy snacks to children (HEbD activities).

Funding and Resources

Overall, project staff and partners felt that the ALbD model of funding was beneficial. Because they were funded for five years, rather than having to seek continuation funds every year or two, partners were able to build momentum for their project without being concerned about its security. Most of the ALbD grant funds were used to support the Project Coordinator position.

“The real gift of RWJF was making this a five-year grant, because then you have the security of knowing that you can keep going, you can keep building and you can generate momentum.” -Partner

Additional funding to supplement the Project Coordinator position was necessary to implement the partnership’s ideas for activities and projects. It was particularly important in Logan Square because many of the activities were conducted in schools that often did not have money in their budgets for non-academic programs, such as physical activity, nutrition classes, or healthy snacks. Partners had much more success when they were able to present an idea and provide the staff, funding, or materials to implement it.

“We have to work out the logistics. If we want to talk to the [school] administrators and make sure they buy in, we have to try to raise a little bit of money.” -Partner

In 2005, the Illinois Department of Public Health provided a small grant to support Active Living Logan Square as part of the CDC funded pilot program, Millennium Neighborhoods, which focuses on reducing obesity. The seed money provided through the ALbD grant aided Active Living Logan Square in leveraging other funds. Many funders were more willing to provide resources to the partnership because it received support from a prestigious foundation. Other funders, however, were less likely to fund projects already receiving support. The partnership also had to compete against other organizations for local funding.

The three core partners (IHEC, UIC, and LSNA) contributed in-kind support for project activities throughout the grant period. Ultimately, partners generated additional monetary and in-kind support from several national and local foundations, corporations, and businesses to support their activities. The diversity of partners and their associations was cited as a critical element of this success.

- Active Transportation Alliance
- Aetna Foundation
- Atlantic Philanthropies
- BikeTown USA
- Blue Cross Blue Shield
- Boeing Foundation
- Chicago Community Trust
- Chicago Public Schools
- Colonel Stanley R. McNeil Foundation
- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program (CMAQ)
- Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children (CLOCC)
- Corporation for National Service
- DiscoverCard
- General Mills Foundation
- Illinois Department of Public Health
- Illinois Safe Routes to School
- Kraft Foundation
- Lloyd A. Fry Foundation
- Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) - New Communities Initiative
- Marguerite Case Foundation
- Nestle Foundation
- Otho S. A. Sprague Memorial
- PepsiCo
- Polk Brothers Foundation
- Prince Charitable Trusts
- Rails to Trails Conservancy
- Trust for Public Land

“There is also leveraging of effort in people and contributed time and stuff that isn’t reimbursed. I know [that one partner] has never been compensated a dime from these activities. A lot of what gets done is just done by volunteer time. It’s not just time, it’s my phone, my office, it all counts.” -Staff

Community Supports and Barriers

The Active Living Logan Square partnership drew on the strengths and addressed the challenges of both the Logan Square neighborhood and the city of Chicago.

Historically, Logan Square residents were older adults who grew up in the neighborhood and stayed to raise their own families. However, in recent years, younger families with higher incomes moved into the neighborhood. In 2002, 80% of residents were under 45 years of age, and over one-fourth were under 15 years old. Despite the influx of higher income families, the community remained primarily lower income.

In Chicago, almost all of the city streets have sidewalks and a growing number of streets have bicycle lanes. However, Logan Square did not have these same amenities, despite a growing population of commuters. In previous decades, streetcar and elevated rail lines ran through the community. Busing was the most commonly used form of public transit when the ALbD grant was written. However, some bus routes did not run after 8:00 pm, making it difficult for individuals working a later shift to commute via public transportation. Likewise, many Logan Square residents worked blue-collar jobs located in the suburbs, which had limited public transportation systems. For others, public transportation was not affordable.

The quality of public parks varied widely; some parks had new or properly maintained equipment, where others had unsafe for not equipment at all.

An important social concern of Logan Square residents during the ALbD grant was safety. The community had one of the highest crime rates in all of Chicago. Many youth were affiliated with gangs; those who were not part of a gang often had friends in a gang. Many parents were afraid that their children would join a gang, be mistaken for a gang member, or be harmed inadvertently during gang violence. In addition, territorial boundaries existed on busy streets, in parks, and other public areas, discouraging many residents from participating in physical or recreational activity outdoors.

“I don’t [feel like I can let my children go out unsupervised] because I have boys and one of my sons looks like the [gang members] a little bit... I call them all the time to make sure they’re okay because I fear that he might be... they may think he is a gangbanger, something can happen on his way from school to home. As a parent I think those things are always in your mind.” -Community member

Logan Square residents expressed feelings of distrust toward police because of experiences of racism and harassment. Community resident felt that they were not respected by police and did not respect them. Although police were perceived to be less responsive than desired, residents continue to seek their help in hopes that they would become a more positive force in the community.

“I understand it’s a big city and they can’t be at everyplace at all times, but it would be helpful in the parks [to have] more police where the kids can play because there is a gang problem. You want to let your kids go out and play.” -Community member

“I look down on police. You need them to protect you. You need to trust them, rely on them, but they don’t give you any respect and they don’t like you.” -Community member

Other safety concerns and barriers to active living mentioned by community members included traffic safety and a growing homeless population.

“In terms of traffic, a lot of the issues that we’re having are people turning. For instance, if you’re walking and you have the right-of-way, but you’ve got people turning... you cannot turn while people are in the streets, if pedestrians are present in the walkway. You would think people would know that, but people just don’t care, people know. People are so aggressive.” -Staff

Active Living Logan Square chose schools as a primary setting to address the growing number of health issues faced by children, due to poor nutrition and inactive lifestyles. Chicago Public Schools (CPS) had not mandated recess for over 25 years. Instituting a district-wide policy proved very challenging due to a variety of issues, including: the short school day (5.75 hours), complicated teachers’ union contracts, fear of neighborhood violence, competing academic demands, lack of teacher and administrator support, insufficient physical education requirements, and lack of outdoor recreational space and equipment.

Outside the school day, children’s access to places to be physically active was also limited. Some schools that had recreational space locked their gates or equipment, so that community residents would not have access after school hours. Very few after-school programs were offered, and recreational programs offered at parks were often too expensive.

“In terms of working in the schools, you really have to find out what the school’s needs are and their priorities and try to get what you would like to bring under that general umbrella. People are very, very busy... the teachers, the faculty, everybody, the administration... they are all very focused on their priorities... but if you can bring something that will actually make their work easier and help their kids... they want what’s good for their kids ultimately.” -Staff

Because of the previous work by Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) and other organizations to increase community leadership and create community change, Logan Square residents were receptive to the Active Living Logan Square partnership. Parents, children, schools, employers, and many others contributed ideas, time, and resources to the project in order to see it succeed. Many residents became involved as participants in ALbD programs and continued to work with the partnership by leading or volunteering with other programs. Despite this interest, some community residents for whom active living was not a high priority did not participate in partnership activities.

Logan Square had five aldermen representing various segments of the neighborhood. The partnership recognized that, in order to make systematic and sustainable change in Logan Square, political support was essential. Although no politician served as a formal partner in Active Living Logan Square, many were involved in specific efforts, such as obtaining helmets for a bicycle program.

The largest challenges in garnering political support were budget constraints and lack of time. Because Chicago’s city budget was stretched thin for most of the ALbD grant period, the partnership was asked to provide evidence through pilot projects that their proposed ideas would be successful. This strategy allowed numerous activities to be implemented but, given the intended short duration of a pilot project, limited their sustainability.

“Our government’s monies are stretched for taking on new initiatives that don’t necessarily have any traction. It’s kind of a big risk for them, but I think they are saying, okay, we can do it and if we prove it’s successful, they will see it as valuable enough to budget for it in future years.” -Staff

Community Assessment

One of Active Living Logan Square partnership’s first activities was to conduct an assessment of the current levels of physical activity and nutrition among residents, as well as barriers to engaging in a healthy lifestyle. Ten bilingual community resident received training in survey methodology and ethics (certified by the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Institutional Review Board) and administered door-to-door surveys to 400 residents. The community assessment helped the partnership modify its activities to meet the needs of the community and created an opportunity for the community to learn about the partnership. The survey generated the following results, which were shared with the community at a public event:

- 75% of residents believed their children’s schools should offer recess;
- 31% of residents owned bicycles, but only 6% reported using their bicycles in the past year;
- 61% of residents said their children owned bicycles;
- 45% of residents said they walked their children to school;
- 92% of residents believed it was not safe for their children to walk alone outdoors during the daytime.

“[The community assessment] was very well organized. They had people who went out door-to-door and did the survey to find out what people’s issues were in terms of physical activity. You know, what they did, where they went, if they didn’t - why? what were the barriers? That took a considerable period of time. At least six months. The first six months was really devoted to that and gave a foundation for knowing what direction to go in; what things to focus on in order to be responsive to the needs of the community.” -Partner

Throughout the grant period, UIC assisted the Active Living Logan Square partnership in conducting several other surveys related to active living activities in one school: McAuliffe Elementary School. The information gathered was used to assess what activities achieved the greatest engagement of the teachers and students.

Focus groups and visioning sessions were a mainstay of the partnership’s efforts to engage the community in its activities. For example, focus groups were used to understand the motivating factors for walking and biking, as well as residents’ visions and concerns about the proposed Bloomingdale Trail/Linear Park project. Two focus groups were held to better understand how to effectively encourage active transportation among parents. Other focus groups revealed that community residents desired a space that would be inviting and accessible for people with disabilities. Community residents also valued a safe place away from traffic for families to be active.

“We invited the neighborhood and we had hot dogs, hamburgers, chips and soda that were donated by one of our community businesses and we talked about the project. We had a space where people could use post-its and notes... what would you like to see in the pocket parks?” -Staff

A health economist/statistician from UIC conducted several assessments of the built environment and health behaviors, including levels of physical activity and barriers to physical activity. From these data, he created a map showing the geographic distribution of parks, other facilities for active living and the level of physical activity of the community residents. Using students’ BMI data and Chicago Police department crime statistics, he also mapped the associations among childhood obesity, crime, and accessibility of parks and playgrounds. The mapping activity helped the partnership adapt its activities to the community’s needs and assets.

“[The researcher has] come up with a method of looking at the built environment. Not just the physical structure and safety and those sorts of issues, but also the networks in relationships that exist, and whether the supports there are sufficient to get people exercising and working together to make some changes.” -Partner

One unique aspect of the assessment was that community residents played a significant role in deciding what areas or elements of the community to examine. This decision resulted in impressive community buy-in and involvement during the early years of the grant. This level of engagement continued throughout the grant period and can be credited for the success of many of the partnership’s activities.

“[The community assessment] also gave the community an introduction to who they were and what they were doing and what they were planning, and it made them feel engaged. I think there was a greater engagement because of it. That was a very important piece.” -Partner

However, because the community determined the assessments on which to focus and collected the data themselves without much formal training, their ability to utilize and interpret data effectively was sometimes limited. In addition, some partners felt that other areas within the neighborhood should have been assessed in order to collect comprehensive data, but the funding provided through the ALbD grant was not enough to support extensive assessment efforts.

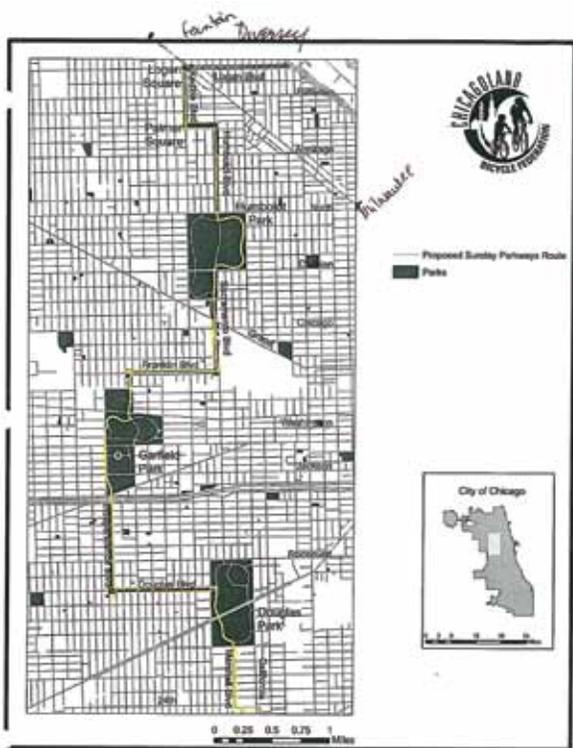
Policies and Physical Projects

The Active Living Logan Square project combined policy changes and physical projects to create permanent and temporary transformations of public space and increase support for active living. Policies and physical projects, related partner, staff and community implementation activities, and associated challenges are described below.

Bloomington Trail



- The Active Living Logan Square partnership collaborated with Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail, a local not-for-profit organization, to advocate for the conversion of the unused Bloomingdale Rail into a mixed-use trail spanning approximately 2.5 miles through Logan Square and three other communities.
- The partnership organized meetings and cookouts under the rail line to build community support for the trail and held five visioning sessions to encourage residents to share ideas and concerns.
- Residents also offered many ideas that were included in the trail plan, including pocket parks (small parks that provide greenspace), access points to existing community institutions and businesses, and enhanced accessibility.
- At the City of Chicago's request, The Trust for Public Land took over management of the development of the trail, including fundraising.
- In 2008, with federal funding from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program, the city posted a Request for Proposals for engineering and designing the trail that stipulated that the community should be engaged in the process.
- Although the trail was years from breaking ground at the end of the grant, partners already saw the benefits; for example, developers often used the future trail as a bargaining chip in purchasing properties or as a promotional feature in developing and marketing new housing.



SUNDAY PARKWAYS -- CELEBRATE LIFE ON THE BOULEVARDS

Open Streets

- The Open Streets project was modeled after a successful program, Ciclovía of Bogotá, Colombia, which the ALBD Project Coordinator had an opportunity to observe to learn about the planning and implementation process.
- In 2007, partners created a committee of stakeholders from five communities along the proposed route in order to gain support from residents and secure philanthropic funding.
- The partnership proposed a policy that would temporarily close a major street running through Logan Square and four other communities to the south to motorized traffic to allow community residents to safely walk, jog, bicycle, or participate in other forms of active transportation.
- With city approval, the partnership piloted three Open Streets events, closing four to eight miles of road for use by over 10,000 residents from five diverse communities.
- Open Streets allowed community residents to move from neighborhood to neighborhood and participate in a range of recreational activities.

“That’s a huge policy issue...to get the agreement of all the churches and businesses and the residents along the boulevard to agree to this, and then to get the city to buy into it and to provide the police presence, the volunteers. Eventually the plan is to have vendors out there during that time, too. There is also the Farmer’s Market which will be going on at that time. So the potential is incredible but it is a huge organizational challenge.” -Staff

► School Safety Committee

- In 2005, the partnership established a committee to review the safety of using non-motorized transportation to commute to and from school as well as to plan an Annual Safety Summit to discuss safety issues.
- Parents, children, police officers, school representatives, aldermen, and community organizations gathered to discuss relevant issues and to develop a safety plan for five schools.



► **School Recess Policy**

- During the 2006-2007 school year, McAuliffe Elementary administrators established a 10-minute daily recess policy for kindergarten through second grade after building a new playground.
- In 2008, McAuliffe Elementary students in third through sixth grade were allowed a 10 minute recess after a playground for older students was built.



“What happened here is that after we helped get them a playground here, the principal here has a lot of kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade teachers who take their kids out 10 minutes a day. I think, as a human being, you get restless and I think you need to release some of that energy and I think you would be more apt to learning and you would be more relaxed and maybe get into fewer discipline problems. I think [recess has] a lot of benefits, and research has shown that it has.” -Partner

School Wellness Councils

- The partnership recognized the importance of continuing active living messaging as McAuliffe Elementary students moved on to Ames Middle School.
- The partnership worked with the Healthy Schools Campaign, a regional coalition, to promote school wellness councils and provide parents with leadership training.
- McAuliffe and Ames formed Wellness Councils composed of administrators, teachers, and parents that assess healthy promotion activities and advocate for the integration of active living principles in school activities.
- The partnership hoped to inspire and mentor three other elementary schools feeding into Ames Middle School to form wellness councils.

“It was clear that in order to sustain some of the work that we were doing [with respect to school safety] there needed to be a voice, an organized voice at each of the schools, a wellness council. Basically their goal would be to assess what the school was doing in relationship to wellness which, the focus is physical activity and nutrition, to advocate the change whether it’s locally or district-wide, to seek resources... There’s no other school districts near us that have done it... So what we want to do is do it at McAuliffe, figure out what works, what doesn’t work, and then duplicate that in all the other schools.” -Staff

► **Other Policies and Physical Projects**

- Partners (e.g., Chicago Department of Transportation) made a number of physical improvements at neighborhood schools, including the construction of two landscaped playgrounds on existing employee parking lots and the installation of bike racks and traffic calming devices (e.g., stop signs).
- Local Aldermen provided helmets to students at low or no cost.
- A bicycle safety and maintenance class led by West Town Bikes was incorporated into the 2008-2009 curriculum for Ames Middle School, the first for Chicago Public Schools.
- McAuliffe Elementary adapted their curriculum to include Take 10! Take 10! is a classroom-based program for kindergarten to fifth grade students that integrates academic learning objectives with 10 minute physical activities.

Challenges and Successes

Active Living Logan Square faced several challenges to implementing its proposed policy and physical project strategies. Overall, the partners and staff noted the importance of making small, meaningful changes while working towards larger goals.

Dealing with bureaucracy proved to be one of the major policy challenges for the Active Living Logan Square partnership. Logan Square covers five different wards, each with an elected leader. In order to effect policy change, the partnership needed the support of all of the elected officials. The five years of the grant provided opportunities to lay some important groundwork for policy change. There were small victories both in schools and the city. Most importantly, the partnership helped parents, teachers, school principals, and other key community stakeholders to better understand their role in policy change and its value.

There were several challenges to creating and implementing a 20 minute recess policy within local schools. First, parents were divided on the issue. Some supported recess, while others felt that resources should be used in other ways. Second, recess policy was related to other school policies, such as lunch, length of school days, and teacher salaries. As a result, partners made an effort to address recess at the district or state level, which was more difficult and demands more staff time.

“I think one of the challenges with the policy was that we probably proposed something that was hard for the public school to make those kids of changes, because the schools are part of the larger Chicago Public School system. It has its own levels and also making any policy...we knew going in that policy changes do take time but we are dealing here with a much bigger system, but I think whatever was accomplished was very successful, I think, even with that one school.” -Partner

The partnership’s efforts to implement an Open Streets policy were difficult to accomplish because of the associated costs. For example, a large number of police officers and traffic management employees were needed to enforce traffic safety.

The Active Living Logan Square partnership faced several common challenges to all of their physical project efforts:

- Physical changes tended to be expensive.
- There was no guarantee that the city would use its political will to leverage resources.
- Local organizations competed for limited funding from the city.
- Limited resources influenced the partnership’s ability to reach and engage community residents.

“The money is limited in the city for schools or all kinds of programs. You have to get organized, you have to advocate and get your piece, or else someone else is going to get it. That’s what we’re trying to do with the trails right now is to build the energy and go to the top of the list.” -Community member

Programs and Promotions

Active Living Logan Square utilized programs and promotions to build support for its policy change and physical project efforts. Programmatic and promotional projects, related partner, staff, and community implementation activities, and associated challenges are described below.

Safe Routes to School

- In 2005, the partnership began a Safe Routes to School program at McAuliffe Elementary and Ames Middle Schools in collaboration with the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy.
- An AmeriCorps member coordinated over 10 Walking School Bus routes through Logan Square, while other AmeriCorps members and parents served as bus captains.
- A local manufacturing company located between McAuliffe Elementary and Ames Middle School allowed its employees to serve as parent patrols, or crossing guards, during the workday.
- All bus captains and parent patrols were required to complete a background check and participate in safety training provided by the Chicago Police Department.
- Partners encouraged parents to allow their children to join the Walking School Bus by assuring them that children would be accompanied by an adult rather than asked to travel to and from school by themselves.

“We make banners for each Walking School Bus captain and they came up with their own name for the Walking School Bus. Like Little Spirits, the Kiki Rugrats.” -Partner

“It’s not an easy sell to take on regular responsibility of other children, but we do have 10 committed parent volunteers. They have to go through background checks and they have to go through the process that ...the Chicago Public Schools requires for volunteers.” -Staff

▶ **Annual Safety Summits**

- Safety Summits were held each year to provide school staff, parents, and community members an opportunity to discuss school and neighborhood safety issues.

▶ **Biking Programs**

- Partners began a bike lock program at McAuliffe Elementary in which children were allowed to check out bike locks from the school if they rode their bikes to school.
- West Town Bikes led a six week summer bike safety and touring program in 2007 with 10 Ames Middle School students, who met four days a week for four hours a day to travel to Chicago landmarks. Students who completed the program earned a new bike, helmet, and lock donated by Schwinn.

▶ **Take 10!**

- Partners (e.g., Americorps volunteers), LSNA staff, and teachers were provided materials and support to integrate the Take 10! curriculum into their learning activities, and teachers received training during their mandatory in-service days at the beginning of the school year.

“Because the different activities are linked with some kind of a learning thing you aren’t really having to take time off task entirely to let them go out to play at recess or whatever. When the teachers were first introduced to it they were like, we have so many minutes we have to do math, and so many minutes we have to do social studies and spelling. I mean you can spell as you march or you can incorporate the physical activity with some piece of the social studies or math or whatever. There’s multiplication: they do that many jumping jacks or whatever...” -Staff

▶ **Go Healthy!**

- In 2007, Active Living Transportation Alliance developed Go Healthy! for parents of McAuliffe Elementary students.
- One hundred parents received guidance from five Go Healthy! coaches on ways to convert at least two travel trips per week from driving to active transportation (e.g., walking, biking, public transit).
- Participants were asked to maintain a travel diary, so that they could note where and how they were traveling then provided recommendations based on their level of activity.
- Participants were provided with safety tips and other information about active transportation.

“The...coaches come from the community. They have full-time jobs but are just people who were interested in biking, or walking, or working with families in the community and were bilingual ...So they meet with families, they have them keep a travel diary everyday to figure out where they are traveling and how they are getting there and then we give them recommendations about trips that are really easy to change, trips that are within walking distance, trips that are within biking distance, trips that with one bus would take you just as long as finding parking and...because walking to and from the bus and train is still more physically active than just sitting in your car.” -Staff

▶ **Walk Across Illinois**

- The partnership became involved with a statewide walking program, Walk Across Illinois, which encouraged Illinois residents to walk at least 167 miles (the distance to cross Illinois) in one year.
- School participants logged onto the Walk Across Illinois website to track how many miles they walked and were given a reward through the program.
- Those who completed the training were offered a summer job at the Chicago Park District to work as a Mayor Daley’s Bike Ambassador and were engaged in mentoring activities.

▶ **Afterschool Programs**

- In 2006 and 2007, middle and high school students earned a stipend through After School Matters for their participation in Junior Bike Ambassadors, a five month job training and mentoring program.

▶ **Other School-based Promotions**

- A number of celebrations and events were held at schools to promote active living; Family Night at McAuliffe Elementary promoted health and literacy efforts through activity stations for parents and students.
- Take-home flyers promoted upcoming events and other partnership activities.
- At McAuliffe Elementary, partners developed materials for a bulletin board, including nutritional information, exercises for children, and reminders about upcoming events.

“We have a lot of events throughout the year at McAuliffe...They had the playground celebration ...and then the healthy eating event. A lot of events going on, so that way, parents would be aware of what we are doing in the community and they will be really, really interested in what’s going on.” -Partner

“We put out some newsletters that went out through the schools to the kids’ families. Most of those had to do with Healthy Eating by Design. We took the kids to a farm and they could see the food growing and they could taste things fresh that they picked and stuff. Healthy recipes, nutrition tips, advertised events like the cooking classes and demonstrations that we would have after school.” -Staff

“I would pass out flyers to the parents of the younger children in the morning and later in the afternoon. We would also post a flyer in the front entrance of the school and later I started calling parents as well to remind them to come.” -Partner

Hoops In the Hood

- In the spring of 2008, LSNA received \$7,750 in grant money from Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)/New Communities Program to support a co-ed youth basketball league (ages 12-18) called Hoops in the Hood.
- The league used volunteer adults as coaches and traveled to troubled street blocks to play on temporary basketball courts.
- Three events were held with block parties during the basketball games offering healthy food, music, activities for younger children, and bicycle safety education.

Promotional Materials

- Partners consulted community and professional resources to produce their messages and materials. For example, a local art teacher volunteered to work with neighborhood children to produce artwork, while local photographers, graphic designers, and publishers were involved in the development and production of community newsletters, flyers, newspaper inserts, press releases, local media stories, and brochures.

Ayuda Mutua (Mutual Help)

- Results from a community survey were used to create a community asset-based program called Ayuda Mutua (Mutual Help) to increase opportunities for physical activity, specifically through bicycle safety and repair, gardening, and dancing.
- The program offered train-the-trainer sessions in which 15-25 community members were trained to deliver classes to fellow community residents.
- West Town Bikes trained individuals through an eight week bike safety, repair, and maintenance course; some graduates later assisted with a 16 week Junior Bike Ambassadors program.
- Openlands offered a three week training course on backyard organic gardening for community residents, in which participants were given a bilingual training manual and encouraged to share their new skills and knowledge with family and friends.

Salsa, Sabor y Salud (Sauce, Flavor, and Health)

- The partnership received funding in 2004 to 2007 to implement the KRAFT Salsa, Sabor y Salud program, a complement to their ALbD activities.
- This culturally tailored program promoted a healthier lifestyle among Latino families by focusing on nutrition, healthy diets, and physical activity.
- Over 190 families completed this program.

Challenges and Successes

Staff, partners, and community members identified a number of barriers and facilitators to implementing their active living programs and promotions.

Programs implemented in the Logan Square neighborhood found success due to partners' commitment to target the identified needs, priorities, and goals of community members and institutions, build upon a working relationship with schools and parent volunteers, and provide training for parents, teachers, and community members.

When the partnership initially approached the McAuliffe Elementary School principal about implementing the Take 10! program in their classrooms daily, he was fully supportive. However, the teachers were not equally excited. By combining active living and healthy eating strategies in the schools, the partnership was able to successfully demonstrate the benefits of the program to the teachers, increasing their buy-in. Specifically, teachers observed improvements in students' ability to pay attention during the school day, discipline rates, and academic performance.

“They began to see the benefits like less disruption, more alertness. The children are better behaved, or they’re learning better.” -Partner

“We brought snacks in at 1:00 and it was really welcomed by the time we got there with it. After about the first two or three weeks of the snacks, the AmeriCorps volunteer who managed to distribute it and do all of it...she was given standing ovations when she would come...the kids would clap and stand up...” -Staff

Active Living Logan Square staff did not feel that its promotional efforts were the strongest component of its work plan. The partnership members attended an RWJF sponsored Spitfire Communications workshop to produce a marketing and communications plan. The partnership members did not feel that it was successful in generating and implementing the plan. The partnership also found the communication methods used for programs and promotions to be challenging. Their first attempt was through newspapers and mailings, but the materials were often mistaken for junk mail and thrown away. Overall, partners stated that they struggled with creating a collective identity or “brand” for themselves. Many community members were familiar with particular activities of the partnership but unaware of the partnership itself and the term “active living.”

Partners also identified the lack of a central venue for promotions as a significant challenge in increasing community awareness. In order to reach the entire community, partners needed to greatly diversify their efforts. However, limited funding prohibited this strategy, and partners chose to focus their efforts in schools.

“We talked about doing some other things that we haven’t done, but I think that promotions is not our strong suit. Part of it is that I think it’s just when you are busy doing, you are not busy writing about it. [The Project Coordinator] and [partners] went to a training that Spitfire gave on how to [do] promotions and little by little I think we are improving in that.” -Staff

“[People aren’t aware of the name Active Living by Design] very much in the broader community. I would say more so in the school community, but I would say if you walked along the streets of Logan Square and you asked anybody that came walking along anything about Active Living by Design, they’d just look at you. They wouldn’t have ever heard of the idea.” -Staff

“It’s so hard to market in a diverse, urban neighborhood like this. We don’t have any one newspaper. Some people read the Spanish language newspaper, and some people read the big newspaper...some people have computers and some people don’t have computers...there’s no one place you can go and hang all of your flyers where everyone goes and gets it. You need multiple approaches, if you look at it that way, so you have to throw a ton of money at it...” -Partner

Staff, partners, and community members identified a number of other challenges to implementing programmatic and promotional strategies:

- School administrators and teachers had to balance active living goals with the need to meet state required educational goals.
- A lack of funding limited the reach of the program, causing discontent among parents and residents in areas not receiving the programs.
- Partners had difficulty sustaining costly programs.
- School and vendor policies made it difficult to create change to organizational policies and practices.
- Safety concerns related to traffic and violence limited community residents from participating in programs.

Sustainability

Active Living Logan Square received an 18 month sustainability grant from RWJF to continue its ALbD project. Partners planned to conduct an evaluation of their initiatives to identify and understand their successes and challenges. They intended to focus primarily on schools by developing and testing a model program within McAuliffe Elementary, their largest success. This model would incorporate the essential elements to successfully implement school-based programs and promote a culture of healthy living in a school community. After testing the model, partners planned to institutionalize programs at McAuliffe Elementary and replicate them in other neighborhood schools.

Project staff and partners recognized that evaluation was an important part of creating sustainable strategies. Although restricted by funding, they were able to conduct a number of pre- and post-test surveys and qualitative interviews to evaluate the impact of their activities and determine how to improve them. For example, a portfolio of the successes and challenges of working with McAuliffe Elementary School was developed to share with Chicago Public Schools, with a desire to replicate the partnership's activities at other district schools.

“It seems to me that they are taking the results at McAuliffe and putting them together in sort of a research format and writing an article on it that you can give to people, the teachers’ union, the [Chicago Public Schools], that would have an impact.” -Partner

Partners felt that their partnership would be sustainable because they were dedicated to continuing their efforts within Logan Square. While most of the leadership and decision-making shifted to LSNA and their community partners, the continued relationship with UIC was considered a necessity. Each organization contributed a critical aspect to maintaining momentum: LSNA lent community involvement and trust to the partnership, whereas UIC was essential for evaluating the partnership's work, something that many funders desired. In addition, the partnership recognized the essential role of funding in the provision of staff salaries, continuation of programs, and maintenance of the partnership. The partnership continued to seek funding to support its goal to create a community that promotes and supports physical activity.

“So in a way I see that IHEC and UIC’s role were much more integral in the beginning as it was being developed. Right now the whole dynamic has shifted so that now it’s all in the community, which is the way it should be because if it is going to be sustainable it has to... happen that way.” -Partner

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