

# ACTIVE Louisville

## Evaluation of Active Living by Design | Louisville, Kentucky | 2003-2008

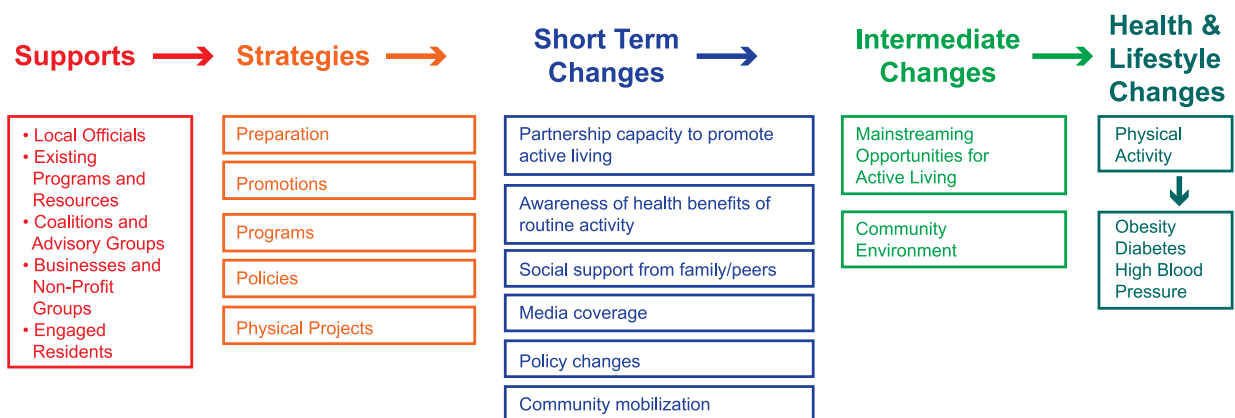
In 2008, Louisville Mayor Jerry Abramson stood before an advisory committee and spoke for fifteen minutes about the importance of walking for improving community health as well as the myriad of initiatives he would propose to make that happen. Among those improvements were the creation of the Step Up Louisville taskforce to promote walkability and accessibility, a list of ten improvements supported by the transit agency to improve transit access, and the re-establishment of the Mayor’s Miles program, which put markers along popular and accessible walking paths. This was a victorious moment for ACTIVE Louisville and its partners because the Mayor previously focused on walking purely as recreation. His change in beliefs was motivated in large part by the active living movement.

“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 Louisville Metro Housing Authority and the ACTIVE Louisville partnership received a five-year, \$200,000 grant as part of the Active Living by Design national program ([www.activelivingbydesign.org](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org)) funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). By advocating for changes in community design, specifically land use, transportation, parks, trails, and greenways, the initiative was intended to make it easier for people to be active in their daily routines.<sup>1</sup>

*“I think [ACTIVE Louisville has] accomplished its initial goal, which was to shape policy and to stimulate action and initiatives that relate to improving the built environment and physical activity. And honestly, based on where we are today compared to where we were in the beginning of the ACTIVE Louisville initiative, I think so much has been achieved. We have several tools in place and we have a mentality in place that...puts us in a good position for the future.” -Staff*

The Active Living by Design (ALbD) Community Action Model provided 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 ACTIVE Louisville to more effectively encourage changes in design, transportation, and policies to cultivate and support a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines.

### Active Living by Design Community Action Model



<sup>1</sup> 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.

The funding provided by ALbD allowed a multitude of organizations, agencies, and individuals to come together to address active living issues in Louisville. ALbD funding prompted collaboration between organizations that had previously not worked together and broadened efforts. The funding also led some partners to change their scope of work to include active living during and after the grant period. Many government departments incorporated active living components into their day-to-day operations. Active living strategies became part of the Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness, the Mayor's Healthy Hometown Movement, the Louisville Metro Department of Planning and Design Services, and Louisville Metro Public Works.

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*“[Another partner] really touched on what to me is one of the cornerstone successes of ACTIVE Louisville, which is that we all know each other now, we all talk to each other and pick up the phone and call each other, there’s a lot more collaboration going on than there used to be.” -Partner*

*“I do think that ACTIVE Louisville has been a key partner in helping us come together, and I think that’s one of the reasons that we are seeing in our community less violent crime, less vandalism.” -Partner*

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### **Louisville, Kentucky**

In 2003, Louisville and Jefferson County became a single governmental entity, creating the 16th largest incorporated city in the nation. ACTIVE Louisville chose to focus much of its work in the neighborhoods of the HOPE VI revitalization area. HOPE VI is a federally-funded, urban development program designed to lessen concentrations of poverty and revitalize public housing. The focus of the HOPE VI in Louisville is Liberty Green, a new mixed-income development in the downtown Phoenix Hill neighborhood that includes over 200 homeownership units, commercial properties, and shared public spaces. The HOPE VI project also includes redevelopment and improvements in the adjacent neighborhoods of Smoketown and Shelby Park. As lead agency, the Louisville Housing Authority looked to the ALbD funding to complement the HOPE VI project by incorporating active living elements into the development and revitalization area. The neighborhoods of Phoenix Hill, Smoketown, and Shelby Park are within walking distance of each other, and all have experienced extreme disinvestment in the last century. The neighborhoods are mostly lower income with large African American populations plagued by poor health, lack of education, high unemployment, and safety concerns. As the area began rebuilding, ACTIVE Louisville hoped to leave a lasting imprint in the rebirth of these communities.

The overall goals of ACTIVE Louisville were to 1) improve facilities, expand programming, and adopt policies in order to create a new active culture and 2) build an environment that supports and encourages physical activity in three focus neighborhoods. The partnership combined policy and physical projects with promotional and programmatic efforts to create an environment supportive of active living.

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*“The key thing about the partnership is just connecting the dots. Different people are working on different things and they see it kind of through their own prism, and it’s been good to have everybody see how they fit into the bigger picture and also to see ways that we can work with each other...” -Staff*

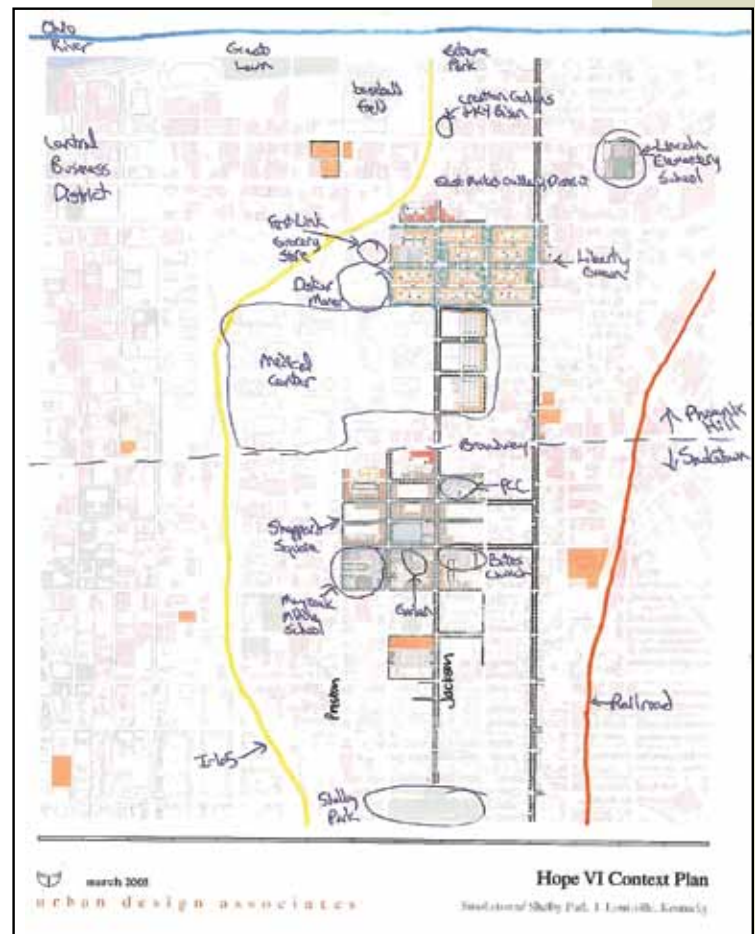
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## Preparation

### Partnership

The core members of the ACTIVE Louisville partnership were the same parties that conceived and wrote the HOPE VI grant. The partnership benefited greatly from the reservoir of information and community connections amassed during the HOPE VI planning period. The Louisville Metro Housing Authority submitted the ALBD application as the lead agency for the ACTIVE Louisville partnership. Other applicants and partnership members included Louisville Metro Government, FitLouisville, and Transit Authority of River City.

ACTIVE Louisville operated with a three-tiered structure, based on each partner's level of involvement. The Steering Committee, comprised of four to six key staff and partners, met quarterly and was responsible for strategic plans, budgets, and sustainability. A small core group of staff met weekly to manage the day-to-day operational needs of the partnership. As core partners, approximately twenty organizations and agencies were divided into various committees and were responsible for delivering programs, policy changes, projects, and promotions. Although the partnership utilized staff, the majority of the partnership's activities were spread among the core partner committees, which met several times throughout the year, depending on the needs of their committee and project. Approximately 60-100 resource partners met bi-annually to offer suggestions and feedback to ACTIVE Louisville.



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*“I couldn’t believe how many really good people we were able to attract to this project. And again that was just really good timing, good marketing, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation name, and just a lot of really positive energy around this whole concept. And we had so many really dedicated and talented people involved...I feel like the people were all just so great, just full of good ideas, really smart people...” -Staff*

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Partnership meetings, held at various locations within or near the revitalization area, facilitated discussion and collaboration opportunities between attendees. Meetings were designed to keep members interested and excited about active living opportunities with healthy foods, interesting activities, and substantial agendas. A periodic newsletter that included information about the partnership, news articles, ongoing activities, opportunities to participate, and recognition of outstanding achievements was also utilized to regularly engage partnership members as well as the broader community.

Towards the end of the funding period, the partnership began to focus on providing technical assistance rather than directly leading efforts. Technical assistance included writing grant applications, evaluating internal policies, and advising on programming and built environment changes. In addition, partners and ACTIVE Louisville staff sat on various committees and initiatives in Louisville to show support and build collaboration. This cross involvement helped the partnership achieve its goals by building important relationships. Most notably, many partnership members were involved with the Mayor’s Healthy Hometown Movement and were able to focus much of its direction on active living.

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*“I think we’ve realized our resources are limited so that taking on entire projects on our own is really not efficient, and we just don’t have the resources available to do them well. And I think if you’re gonna do programming, if you’re gonna plan your own events, you really have to have a lot of time to dedicate to make them run effectively.” -Staff*

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ACTIVE Louisville attributed much of its success to the involvement and collaboration of such a large number of varied partners. Staff and partners identified additional strengths and keys to success:

- The partnership had many committed and dedicated partners.
  - The partnership encouraged teamwork between partners, which enhanced the effectiveness of its efforts.
  - Many of the partners served the same geographical project area, which facilitated collaboration.
  - Early successes provided support for the partnership to expand its efforts citywide.
  - The partnership was effective at collaboration and networking, which increased the likelihood of success.
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*“I think we have a very wide and very diverse partnership, and I think that it’s an informal partnership structure and that it’s based on relationships between the individuals and on a lot of in-kind sharing of resources, not so much on monetary funding. It’s worked really well for us to just be able to have conversations with people and figure out how we can help each other, you know, with the limits and resources that everyone has.” -Staff*

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Partners and staff identified other challenges faced by the partnership:

- Key partners were confused about ALbD staff roles and responsibilities, as well as how ALbD grant funds were supposed to be used.
  - Ambitious early work plans lacked necessary strategic planning.
  - Inconsistency in organization representation at partnership meetings hampered progress because of the need to repeat and thoroughly explain activities at each meeting.
  - Organizational and governmental budget cuts and financial limitations influenced the number of people available to work with the partnership on various projects.
  - Maintaining good relationships with partners required that the leaders help members with individual initiatives and compromise to meet objectives.
  - Internal and external staff turnover made it difficult to maintain relationships, continuity in approach, and internal memory.
  - Liberty Green, the HOPE VI development, was under construction during the grant period, which made it difficult to engage residents.
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*“You never know about what’s going on with the budget cuts either. You worked with ten people last month, and the budget’s cut, and then you’re working with two and you don’t have the same heads, hands, or feet on the project, and it kind of makes things a little bit cumbersome.” -Partner*

*“We don’t have to worry about are we going to have enough kids. What we have to worry about is, are we going to have enough money.” -Partners*

*“I think it could’ve been more strategic and focused...there’s so many pieces of it that we just kept sort of peeling off clothes as we walked along...I’m like oh, can’t do that, can’t do that, can’t do that ...so we could’ve been more strategic.” -Staff*

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The table below lists the partners involved in the ACTIVE Louisville partnership.

Members of the ACTIVE Louisville partnership	
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Heart Association</li> <li>• Fit Louisville</li> <li>• Jefferson County Cooperative Extension Service</li> <li>• Louisville/Jefferson County Metro Government               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Center for Health Equity</li> <li>- Mayor’s Healthy Hometown Movement</li> <li>- Public Health and Wellness Department</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Louisville Medical Center Development Corporation</li> <li>• Partners for a Healthy Louisville</li> <li>• Passport Health Plan</li> </ul>
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jefferson County Public Schools               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meyzeek</li> </ul> </li> <li>• University of Louisville</li> </ul>
Parks & Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Louisville/Jefferson County Metro Government Parks Department</li> <li>• Presbyterian Community Center</li> <li>• YMCA Louisville</li> </ul>
Urban Design, Planning & Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coalition for the Advancement of Regional Transportation</li> <li>• Transit Authority of River City</li> <li>• University of Kentucky Landscape Architecture Department</li> <li>• Urban Design Associates</li> </ul>
Community Leaders, Policy & Decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mayor’s Office</li> </ul>
Other Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Louisville Metro Housing Authority               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Housing and Family Services Department*</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Louisville/Jefferson County Metro Government               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Metropolitan Sewer District</li> <li>- Neighborhoods and Community Outreach Department</li> <li>- Police Department</li> <li>- Public Works Department</li> <li>- Smoketown/Shelby Park Weed and Seed</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bike Louisville</li> </ul>
Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smoketown/Shelby Park Farmer’s Market</li> </ul>
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
Community & Faith-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bates Memorial Baptist Church</li> <li>• Center for Accessible Living</li> <li>• Community Farm Alliance</li> <li>• Downtown Development Corporation</li> <li>• ElderServe</li> <li>• Neighborhood Associations (Phoenix Hill, Smoketown, Shelby Park)</li> <li>• YouthBuild</li> </ul>

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

## ***Leadership and Champions***

The Louisville Metro Housing Authority served as the lead agency for ACTIVE Louisville during the grant period. While the Housing Authority was a tremendous asset for partnership efforts related to Liberty Green, its overall role as the lead agency proved challenging for other aspects of the partnership's work plan. Both internal and external bureaucratic and regulatory roadblocks were a hindrance at times. The Housing Authority had a cumbersome budgeting and auditing process that complicated the partnership's operations. ACTIVE Louisville's mission was also quite different from that of the Housing Authority, which made active living-related questions, assistance, and concerns a low priority to the Housing Authority staff. In addition, the Housing Authority had to follow federal procurement regulations. The partnership had difficulties hiring contractors for projects because of this barrier.

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*“[The Housing Authority] has given [the partnership] great access in terms of getting to resident councils. We can have anything we want mailed out with rent statements...there's some very practical ways where it's been very helpful...” -Staff*

*“Having the housing authority as the fiscal agent has provided some difficulties in that we're subject to all the procurement regulations that they have through the federal [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development]. So you know we can't just go hire somebody to put in a walkway at our garden in our garden, we have to go through a bidding process. So we're actually have been looking at possibly moving the fiscal agent to another organization in town...so that we can sort of eliminate some of that red tape.” -Staff*

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The position of ACTIVE Louisville Project Director changed several times during the grant period because the position did not offer a competitive salary or benefits due to limited funding. Nonetheless, those who served as Project Directors were all very passionate and capable people who remained committed to the partnership even after leaving the payroll. Each of the Project Directors brought different qualities and connections to the partnership, such as connections to former employers, including the Transit Authority of River City and the Housing Authority.

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*“We've had a lot of turnover. I think mainly due to the fact that the grant funds are not enough to really fund people full-time, there's no benefits attached. Most people have full-time jobs, and they're trying to work on the active living partnership as well. We periodically kind of have an upheaval of staff and sort of all the stress that comes along with that.” -Staff*

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Along with Project Directors, ACTIVE Louisville staffed the partnership with one staff member and various consultants. Many people also donated time or put in part-time hours to assist the partnership. Relying on such a large proportion of volunteer time also had its drawbacks. Because of full-time commitment to their employers, the volunteer ALbD work was not always a priority. There was also considerable internal turnover because of the reliance on part-time and volunteer assistance.

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*“You have a lot of passionate personalities who are willing to put in the extra time and pay for stuff out-of-pocket when they needed to and host dinners and make the relationships with the neighborhood people, and you've had a lot of really down-to-earth people on this grant.” -Staff*

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The biggest challenge faced by ACTIVE Louisville was having a lead agency (the Housing Authority) that was subject to federal regulations, which slowed productivity tremendously.

One individual emerged as a champion of the project. A partner with connections to the Mayor's Office and to many people working for Metro Louisville was involved in writing and submitting the original ALbD grant and stayed involved in the project throughout the grant period. ACTIVE Louisville was able to get a number of projects accomplished and establish government connections because of her involvement, take-charge attitude, and persistence.

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*“She’s more than willing to just say...‘get on board here...you guys aren’t doing anything during the winter, you’re not building roads because it’s too cold, you can’t cut through frozen soil to build the roads, so come on in here and cut through this soil,’ and so it worked real well in that way...But it was [this champion] who’s the one that knew that and could pull the right strings or make the right phone call...” -Staff*

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### **Funding and Resources**

Being a recipient of an RWJF grant funding played a major role in the success of the partnership because of the credibility associated with the foundation. The connection elicited interest and support from many organizations that may not have been involved otherwise. ACTIVE Louisville was able to leverage ALbD funding to obtain over \$4 million for active living for the Louisville area. Partners reached out to a number of local, state, and national funders to expand the amount of financial resources available to support and grow the partnership's initiatives. Some of the support funding came from the following organizations:

- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (Special Opportunities grants)
- Nickelodeon
- Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky
- Jefferson County Public Schools
- Kentuckiana Regional Planning and Development Agency
- Louisville Metro Government departments
- Louisville/Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District
- National Gardening Association
- Home Depot
- Transit Authority of River City
- Safe Routes to School

The partnership also took advantage of shared resources to accomplish partnership goals. Many organizations involved with the partnership were able to offer in-kind support to the partnership and take on many aspects of ACTIVE Louisville's programs and projects. For example, the Presbyterian Community Center and Bates Memorial Baptist Church both hosted and coordinated partnership programs in their buildings.

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*“It’s worked really well for [the partnership] to just be able to have conversations with people and figure out how we can help each other with the limits and resources that everyone has.” -Staff*

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## ***Community Supports and Challenges***

The ALbD grant provided Louisville with an opportunity to draw on its strengths and address its challenges related to active living. The ACTIVE Louisville focus neighborhoods (Smoketown, Phoenix Hill, and Shelby Park) are home to 10,912 Louisville residents. The median family income in the area is \$16,336, one-third of the median for the metro area. The child poverty rate is 3.5 times higher than the Jefferson County rate. Thirty-six percent of the population in the area lives in public housing, and seventy percent of the households are female-headed. Unemployment in the area is 15% compared to 6% for Jefferson County, and the crime rate is 2.7 times higher than that of Jefferson County. Fifty-eight percent of Jefferson County residents are overweight and 28% are obese. Louisville residents have high rates of high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, heart disease, and cancer.

The residents of Smoketown, Phoenix Hill and Shelby Park are primarily lower income and generally have low education levels. The area also suffers from high resident turnover rates. Smoketown is a nine-block, predominantly African American area and one of the poorest neighborhoods in Louisville. The neighborhood has no large employers, and 42% of the residents live in public housing. Phoenix Hill is a predominately African American neighborhood with a large homeless population. The neighborhood is also home to many housing units for the elderly and disabled. Shelby Park is a more diverse mixed-income neighborhood. Forty-two percent of its residents do not have a high school degree.

While Louisville has some of the lowest crime rates in the nation for a metropolitan area its size, the ALbD focus neighborhoods have the highest rates of vandalism, crime, gang activity, and homelessness in the metro Louisville area. Residents stated that safety concerns deterred them from participating in an active lifestyle. Community members also felt that the poor relationship between the police and area residents added to the lack of perceived safety in the neighborhoods.

Many residents in the target neighborhoods do not own cars and rely on public transportation. The Louisville transportation system is primarily a hub and spoke system, which means that most transit traffic moves along routes connected to one centralized location. While this system is beneficial for residents who work and live near the hub, suburban residents find the system inconvenient at times because they must first ride downtown in order to transfer to their preferred route.

Staff, partners, and community members shared a number of other characteristics of Louisville's physical conditions that challenge active living, including the abundance of vacant lots, a lack of single-family homes, absentee landlords, an abundance of interstates in the downtown area, lead contamination from old buildings, presence of homeless shelters, and inadequate sidewalks.

Engaging and earning the trust of neighborhood residents was a challenge to the partnership because residents were wary of government and organizational involvement in neighborhoods that had been neglected in the recent past. In addition, many residents were transient, which made maintaining a consistent relationship difficult. The partnership relied on the articulate, enthusiastic support and advocacy of several key community champions to engage their respective neighborhoods and to ensure the success of the partnership's projects and programs. The relationships with these allies established trust and open communication between ACTIVE Louisville and the residents of each neighborhood.

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*“These are the people that show up at every event that involves the neighborhood and they are a wonderful conduit to get involvement from other neighborhood residents and have been really key to developing a sense of trust and communication with the neighborhood.” -Staff*

*“We have several community members who are really sort of key stakeholders in each neighborhood. And then kind of a wider array of residents who are involved in activities on an ongoing basis...” -Staff*

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It was also essential to collaborate with these community members to develop programs and projects by cultivating a shared vision as a means of increasing community support and as a way to ensure the success of the project. By using community champions and being responsive to resident's needs and concerns, ACTIVE Louisville developed a mutual level of respect with area residents, which in turn empowered residents to take responsibility and interest in their neighborhoods.

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*“I think that we’ve sort of earned a lot of respect and a lot of credibility within the neighborhood for taking that kind of approach because they feel like we’re responsive to their needs and that we understand their culture and that we respect what they’ve been doing over the years with really limited resources to make it a better community.” -Staff*

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ACTIVE Louisville had considerable political support from the Louisville/Jefferson County Metropolitan Government because of the mayor. Nicknamed “Mayor for an Active Life,” the long-time Louisville leader was a strong enthusiastic supporter, not only of ACTIVE Louisville, but also of active living in general. A memo issued by the Mayor’s Office encouraged all Metro Louisville departments to participate in and support ACTIVE Louisville with paid staff time. This encouragement from the top enabled the partnership to collaborate quickly and efficiently with various government departments. The ability to receive support and resources from the Louisville Metro Government and the media coverage surrounding the mayor increased attention and interest in the activities of the partnership.

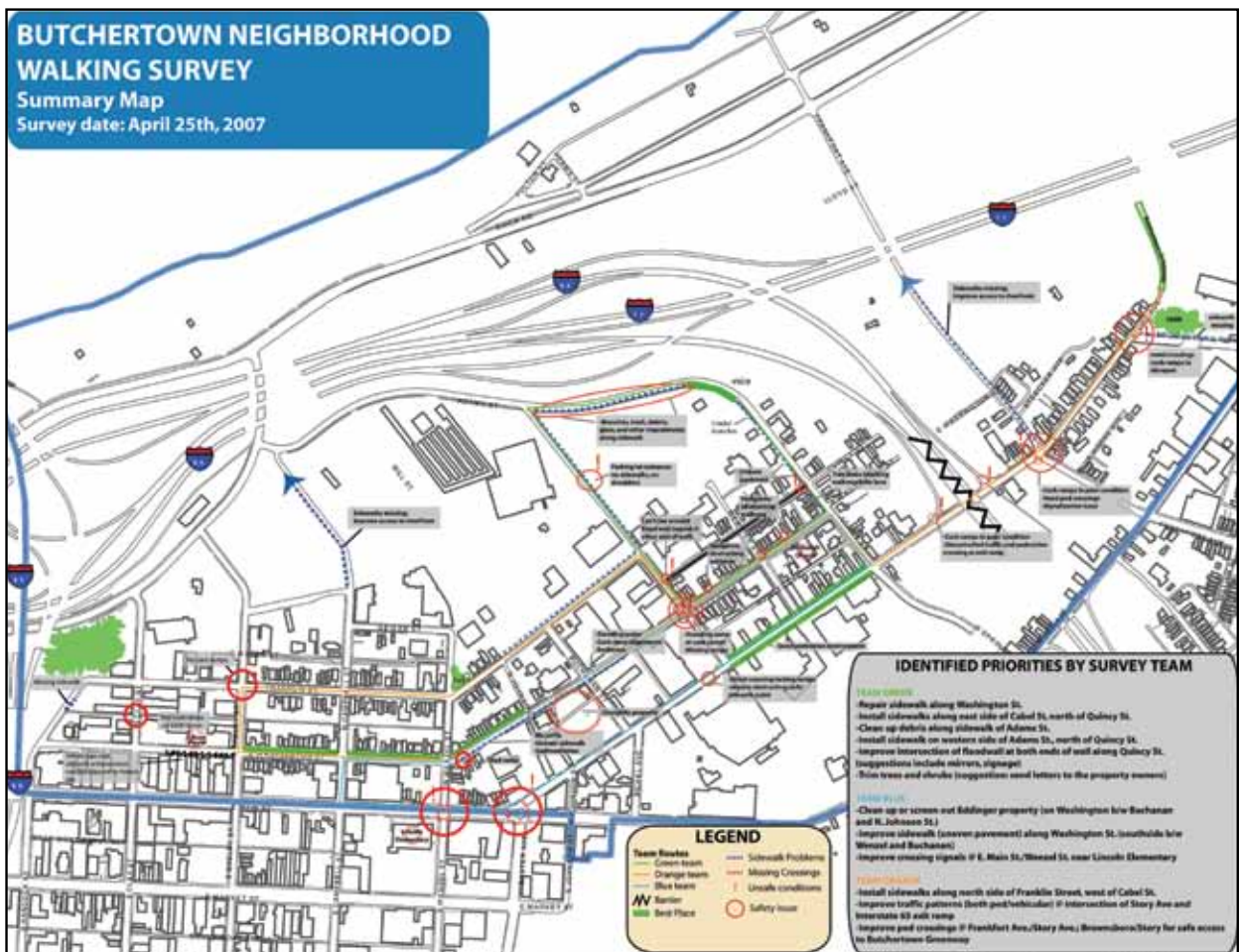
Although political support was strong for ACTIVE Louisville, the partnership experienced some challenges when working with government entities, including bureaucracy, regulations, and occasional inaction.

### **Community Assessment**

ACTIVE Louisville, in conjunction with the Metro Public Works Department, the pedestrian coordinator, and the Mayor’s Healthy Hometown Movement Active Living Committee, developed a Walkability Assessment Tool focused on walking, biking, and transit. The tool was used to conduct walkability audits in multiple neighborhoods during the ALbD grant period. Residents walked designated paths in their neighborhoods and used the assessment tool to identify areas in need of improvement.

The tool allowed community members to communicate directly to government officials about changes and improvements they wanted to see in their community. It also increased community buy-in and engagement and made the process of neighborhood planning and improvement more effective. The results of the assessment were incorporated into improvement plans for the neighborhoods.

Because of the success of the walking audits, the Louisville Metro Planning and Design Services Division incorporated the Walkability Assessment tool into its official Neighborhood Planning Process. In addition, the partnership made the assessment tool available to other communities and held Train-the-Trainer courses to educate others on the use of the tool. Sidewalk inventories were also conducted to assess deficiencies in neighborhood sidewalk networks.



ACTIVE Louisville, along with the Presbyterian Community Center, also conducted a series of focus groups to determine the basic types of programming and promotions that would resonate with area residents. Results of the focus groups indicated that residents had an interest in structured, well-publicized opportunities for physical activity. The residents understood the benefits of exercise but lacked the time and motivation to be active. They also sought increased opportunities to engage children in physical activity and to learn how to effectively encourage children to be active. Most notably, residents expressed a concern about neighborhood safety in relation to physical activity.

The Metro Police Department, with assistance from ACTIVE Louisville, conducted a Crime Prevention through Environmental Design analysis in Smoketown. The analysis evaluated the physical environment in terms of safety, crime prevention, and barriers to physical activity. Results of the evaluation were used to develop solutions to increase safety.


## Policies and Physical Projects

In addition to ensuring that Liberty Green, the new housing development, supported active lifestyles, ACTIVE Louisville sought policies aimed at integrating health and fitness into the mission of the Presbyterian Community Center and adding the built environment as a focus of the Public Health Department's initiatives. Policies and physical projects, related partner, staff, and community implementation activities, and associated challenges are described as follows.

### ▶ **Active Living Committee**

- The mayor of Louisville established the Mayor's Healthy Hometown Movement, a government-wide commitment to support healthy lifestyles by promoting physical activity, nutrition, policy changes, and access to resources.
- ACTIVE Louisville led the establishment of an Active Living Committee (originally called the Built Environment Committee) as part of the Mayor's Healthy Hometown Movement in 2006.
- The committee, comprised and led by many partnership members, was charged with recommending built environment changes and improved access to healthy foods and opportunities to be physically active across Louisville.

### ▶ **Street Design Policies and Projects**

- The Louisville Metro Department of Planning and Design incorporated the Walkability Assessment Tool into its Neighborhood Planning Process.
  - ACTIVE Louisville was instrumental in creating change for street design in Louisville by advocating for, supporting, and proposing policies and projects that support active living.
  - A road diet (i.e., reduction in lanes) in front of a grocery store benefited a community with a high population of consumers with visual impairments.
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- Sidewalks were widened on main east-west corridors.
  - A road diet on Olmsted Parkway decreased the number of driving lanes and added greenways and multi-modal paths to encourage active lifestyles.
  - East-west streets were changed from one-way to two-way.
  - Bike paths were added in popular locations in Louisville, such as the University of Louisville and Old Louisville.
  - Regulation curb ramps were included in new development plans.
  - Completion of physical projects in the target neighborhoods positively affected crime levels and improved resident's pride in their communities.

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*“I was in this meeting two months ago and the engineer from Public Works comes in and he suggests putting the road on a road diet. And I think we almost fell out of our chairs, we were like ‘Oh my god, they were listening. They were listening!’” -Staff*

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### ▶ ***Safe Routes to School***

- The partnership held a national training for Safe Routes to School in October 2005 with more than 50 attendees.
- The partnership worked with the school principal to develop a plan to improve routes to school that included street design projects and traffic redirection during peak travel times.
- The partnership applied for and received a Safe Routes to School grant for Meyzeek Middle School to fund street design improvement plans, including the closure of a dangerous side street, addition of signal timers to crosswalks, relocation and improvement of school crossing signage, and the addition of bio-swale drainage into curb bulb-outs.

### ▶ ***Hancock Pedestrian Corridor***

- The Hancock Pedestrian Corridor project was initiated with an RWJF Special Opportunities grant.
- The partnership successfully advocated for improvements along a 1.2-mile corridor connecting Shelby Park and Waterfront Park, which included the installation of new sidewalks and the addition of street trees and sidewalk furniture.
- In response to the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design Analysis, efforts to increase safety included occasional police patrols, neighborhood clean-ups, and community walking events.

### ▶ ***New Development and Master Plans***

- The partnership worked with the Louisville Metro Planning and Design Services Division on the Smoketown Neighborhood Campus Plan to include built environment improvements in the redevelopment plans.
- The Metro Louisville Community Walkability Plan, which included short and long-range projects in the areas of promotion, design, implementation, and education, served as a priority list for changes that would need to happen to make the community safer and more appealing for active living.
- The Metro Louisville Bike Plan set priority bike corridors for improvement.
- A Facilities Plan addressed pedestrian levels of service at a list of priority facilities in the Louisville area.



### ▶ ***Liberty Green (HOPE VI) Development***

- Active living components were included in the Liberty Green HOPE VI project to ensure that the development was conducive to walking, biking, and physical activity: pocket parks, wide unobstructed sidewalks, well-marked and signaled street crossings, traffic calming islands, way-finding signage, parking in the rear of buildings, right of ways, street trees, pedestrian amenities, appropriate lighting, accessibility features, and sculptures created by a local artist for play equipment.
- The partnership developed a plan for an active living center in the development to be implemented when funding was available. The active living center amenities were housed at a temporary site during the ALbD grant period.
- Some projects, such as pocket parks, were unable to be completed due to funding shortages and sharply increased construction costs due to Hurricane Katrina.



### ▶ ***Safety-related efforts***

- With support from the Louisville Metro Police Department, the partnership established a safety committee in the Shelby Park neighborhood.
- The Presbyterian Community Center Clean Team implemented low-cost, short-term safety improvements, such as cleaning up vacant lots and increasing lighting, in response to resident concerns about safety.

### ► **The St. Peter Claver Community Garden**

- Using funding from the RWJF Healthy Eating by Design grant, the partnership created the St. Peter Claver Community Garden to provide healthy eating options and nutrition education to area residents.
- The garden became a popular walking destination for students from nearby Meyzeek Middle School and for residents within the Smoketown and Shelby Park neighborhoods.
- The garden became a central, physical location for ACTIVE Louisville with which the community could identify and be excited.
- Widespread lead contaminated soil in the neighborhood in which the garden was located prevented residents from growing gardens in their backyards; the partnership was required to replace lead-contaminated soil at the garden site, providing access to safe gardening space.
- Alice Waters, a well-known local food advocate, visited the garden and dedicated the pavilion, which generated publicity and increased awareness of the garden.
- Community members and organizations took pride in the community garden and became very active in its design and upkeep.
- The garden provided a good environment for kids to receive nutritional education and to take part in active tasks such as pushing wheel barrels and other chores around the garden.
- A number of groups were involved in the garden, including Meyzeek Middle School (student mural), Meyzeek Middle School's Environmental Coordinator (equipment donation), YouthBuild (infrastructure improvements), Metropolitan Sewer District (rain garden installation), Bright Spot (plant donations), local lumber companies (supply donations), Brother to Brother, Sister to Sister, and the Clean Team.
- The garden received additional grant support from ALbD, RWJF Special Opportunities, Metropolitan Sewer District, and the National Gardening Association.



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*“That space was an eyesore in this community, and now you drive by there or you go there and find peace and tranquility there and you see people working. I think it’s one of the most beautiful spots in our community, and people feel real good about that.” -Partner*

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### ► **Other Policies and Physical Projects**

- The partnership successfully advocated for the installation of bike racks on public transit buses to promote alternative modes of transportation.
- Partner Bike Louisville led an initiative to install a large sculptural bike rack, and bike racks were installed in Smoketown.
- The partnership was instrumental in changing the Farmer’s Market policy to accept food stamps, WIC and senior vouchers for payment.
- The Jefferson County Public Schools received recognition for their vending machine policy in which vending machines are locked during school and an hour after school and offer only healthy options when they are unlocked.
- The partnership was active in the development of the Presbyterian Community Center’s Neighborhood Campus concept, which includes a nine-block area plan for physical and social improvements for Smoketown.
- The partnership funded a youth bicycle repair shop in Smoketown that was eventually taken over by Bicycle Louisville.

## **Challenges**

Staff, partners, and community members identified several challenges faced by the partnership in advocating for, developing, implementing, and sustaining policy changes and physical projects:

- Developers had different ideas about projects, which sometimes made it difficult to reach a consensus on active living components.
- Governmental bureaucracy occasionally hindered policy change and implementation.
- Metro Louisville was hesitant to include sidewalk furniture and trees as part of street design because these elements were perceived as conducive to prostitution, drug dealing, and loitering.
- It was challenging to secure funds for street design projects.
- Some physical project were limited by Louisville Metro's regulations related to mid-block crosswalks, street closures, and property owner responsibility for sidewalk repair.
- Concerns about safety kept residents from engaging in physical activity.
- Requests made by the partnership for an increase in sidewalks or amenities had to be tied to a specific location and need.

## **Promotions and Programs**

The partnership conducted extensive programmatic and promotional efforts. However, towards the end of the ALbD funding period, ACTIVE Louisville began to shift towards the provision of technical assistance and support for existing efforts rather developing its own. ACTIVE Louisville transferred ownership of programs and promotions to partner organizations. While partnership programs had mixed success in terms of participation, the primary goals of raising awareness of the partnership, building credibility and trust in the neighborhoods, and establishing relationships with community groups was met. Promotional and programmatic efforts, related partner, staff, and community implementation activities, and associated challenges are described as follows.

### **► Pedestrian Summit**

- Through the Mayor's Health Hometown Movement, the partnership hosted a Pedestrian Summit to raise awareness about walkability, to lay a framework for the development of built environment policy and to give the community a voice regarding their concerns and hopes for their community's walkability.
- Over 100 participants completed exercises to help understand the connection between the built environment and health and to encourage personal ownership and responsibility in making the community walkable.
- Feedback and results from the summit informed the Louisville Walkability Plan, which laid out changes to make the community more safe and appealing for transportation and recreation.

### ► **Get Up, Get Out, Get Moving About**

- The partnership created the free Get Up, Get Out, Get Moving About program, which was housed at the Presbyterian Community Center.
- The program featured three different fitness classes led by a personal trainer, including Golden Gliders (15-minute conditioning program for seniors that included exercises designed to increase strength and flexibility), Go-Getters (personal training and workout counseling program for adults), and Hip Hop-ercise (dance exercise class designed for female youth and adults).
- The program began with 235 participants and grew to over 3,000 two years later.
- The Presbyterian Community Center adopted the program and received funding from the Louisville Metro Department of Health and Wellness to continue the program.

### ► **Back on Track**

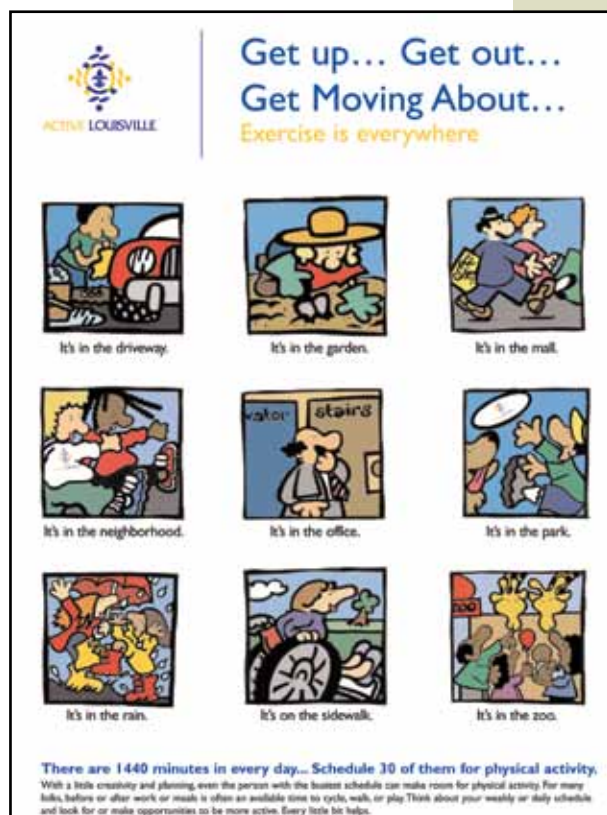
- The partnership created the Back on Track program at the Shelby Park Community Center that coincided with renovation of a walking path to promote physical activity through walking groups, pilates classes, and health education sessions.
- Early attendance in the program ranged from 15 to 40 individuals each week.
- The Shelby Park Community Center opted to discontinue the program due to challenges related to staff time and promotional needs.

### ► **Community Events**

- The partnership hosted and supported a number of events at Meyseek Middle School, including the Family Fitness Festival and the Back to School Jam, to promote healthy eating and physical activity through free physicals, immunizations, school supply giveaways, physical activity stations, and free healthy food options.
- The partnership was involved in a number of other community events, including a Get Up, Get Out community kickoff cook-out, Worldwide Day of Play, Smoketown Bicycle Festival, Safe Routes to School training, Phoenix Hill Street Fair, Family Fitness Day, hip-hop showcases, and Hike and Bike.
- Partner members served on various event committees, worked to add active living components to existing events, and incorporated lower fat, higher nutritional value food choices.

### ► **Louisville Bicycle Summit**

- Through the Mayor's Healthy Hometown Movement, the partnership played an active role in the Louisville Bicycle Summit, which was organized to provide an opportunity for Louisville Metro employees, community leaders, and activists to develop priorities and a plan of action for the Bike Louisville program and Bike Master Plan.
- Participants created a list of priorities and goals to guide Bike Louisville and the creation of a master plan.
- Partnership staff facilitated discussions about community programming to promote bicycling in Louisville.
- Participant suggestions led to the creation of Hike & Bike events held on Labor Day and Memorial Day, which included community bike rides and walks held on closed streets.



► ***Other programmatic and promotional efforts***

- Louisville Metro Health and Parks Departments provided afterschool programs and low-cost exercise classes with support and guidance from the partnership.
- Presbyterian Community Center offered a basketball league, a community clean-up effort, and an afterschool program with support and guidance from the partnership.
- The partnership purchased or developed several incentives to promote and encourage residents and students to participate in active living, including meals, t-shirts, Frisbees, ribbons, and medals.
- In order to bring attention to its efforts, the partnership utilized a number of promotional strategies, including the distribution of flyers in high traffic areas, billboards to promote neighborhood walking, community bike rack jingles, press releases about partnership efforts, a video about the community garden entitled “In the Garden,” and program schedule updates on websites and in newspapers.
- A Smoketown neighborhood walking map was produced, with plans to develop walking maps for the other ALbD neighborhoods.
- ACTIVE Louisville and the Active Living Committee received press coverage in local and national media.
- Representatives of the partnership presented to local, regional, and national audiences, including Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Public Transportation Association, Rail-revolution, Kentucky Conference of Black City Officials, National Policy and Legal Analysis Network, League of American Bicyclists’ National Summit, and Kentucky Rails to Trails.
- The city earned numerous recognitions for livability and healthy lifestyles, including an honorable mention in 2006 and a bronze level of recognition in 2007 from the League of American Bicyclists, a Top Livability award from the U.S. Conference of Mayors in 2008, and recognition from Outside Magazine as a “Top 20 Best Town in America” in 2008.





## ***Strengths and Challenges***

The partnership identified a number of characteristics that contributed to the success of their programmatic and promotional efforts:

- Programs that were free and open to all residents were more successful.
- Health care providers often referred patients to certain programs.
- Programs benefited from word-of-mouth promotion.
- Instructors were both male and female and of various age groups to appeal to all residents.
- The partnership found public relations and local press coverage more beneficial in promoting its efforts than social marketing.
- Modest local media coverage increased the credibility of the partnership to both residents and community leaders.
- The partnership found more success when they became involved with existing efforts as opposed to creating their own.
- The success of programs could be attributed to alignment with existing community interests and location of the programs in visible and easily accessible community venues.

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*“I think the media coverage really helped a lot because, again it’s just, you know, credibility; you have to keep showing that you know how to get stuff done and you know how to spread the word... We tried to do some social marketing; I don’t think that was nearly as impactful as our general public relations media and bringing it to the attention of community leaders, I think that was really more important in some, in a lot of ways.” -Staff*

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Staff, partners, and community members identified a number of challenges to developing, implementing and maintaining programmatic and promotional efforts in the target neighborhoods:

- There was a lack of motivation because the programs were not long-lasting.
- Programs required incentives in order to build interest at start-up.
- There was a lack of funding to sustain programs long-term.
- There were concerns about liability issues with volunteer program leaders.
- The partnership was not always successful in reaching the appropriate audience with promotional efforts.
- Community members were sometimes unwilling to participate in activities because of concerns about crime and safety.
- The partnership did not always have enough staff to cover program demands.
- The partnership had a hard time getting additional funding from the state to support the WIC-friendly farmers’ market.
- School administrators had concerns about liability issues related to Safe Routes to School.
- The school district had other priorities related to desegregation and rezoning during the ALbD grant period.

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*“When we originally started, we started with all the walking clubs and we soon got to the realization that we were going to have to step back and look at public safety in the neighborhood before, because people aren’t going to go outside if they don’t feel safe, and whether it’s perceived or real, we’ve got to address that first.” -Staff*

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## Sustainability

Partnership staff noted that the key to sustainability efforts was to think about sustainability from the beginning: designing an ultimate outcome into every project, scanning for root policies that create roadblocks, advocating for policy change, involving key leaders in the community, and targeting organizations that could sustain activities beyond the grant period.

Towards the end of the ALbD funding period, ACTIVE Louisville worked to turn over control and funding of its efforts to partner organizations. Many organizations adopted active living principles and incorporated programs and events into their work. ACTIVE Louisville alumni went on to serve on several key community planning committees, which allowed the partnership to promote active living and healthy eating principles.

ACTIVE Louisville moved toward operating solely in an advisory capacity as part of the Active Living Committee within the Mayor's Healthy Hometown Movement. The Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness became an active partner in seeking grants related to the built environment and systems changes to reverse childhood obesity, including the ALbD Sustainability grant, which focused on the following goals:

- Address ongoing safety issues related to the Hancock Pedestrian Corridor project.
- Monitor follow-through for the Community Walkability Plan.
- Apply for and implement Safe Routes to School grants.
- Expand the number of neighborhoods conducting walkability assessments and ensure the results are incorporated into neighborhoods plans.
- Find new grants to support active living initiatives.

The ALbD grant ensured that Louisville's future health initiatives would include a focus on the built environment.

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