

Active Living in Santa Ana (ALISA)

Evaluation of Active Living by Design | Santa Ana, California | 2003-2008

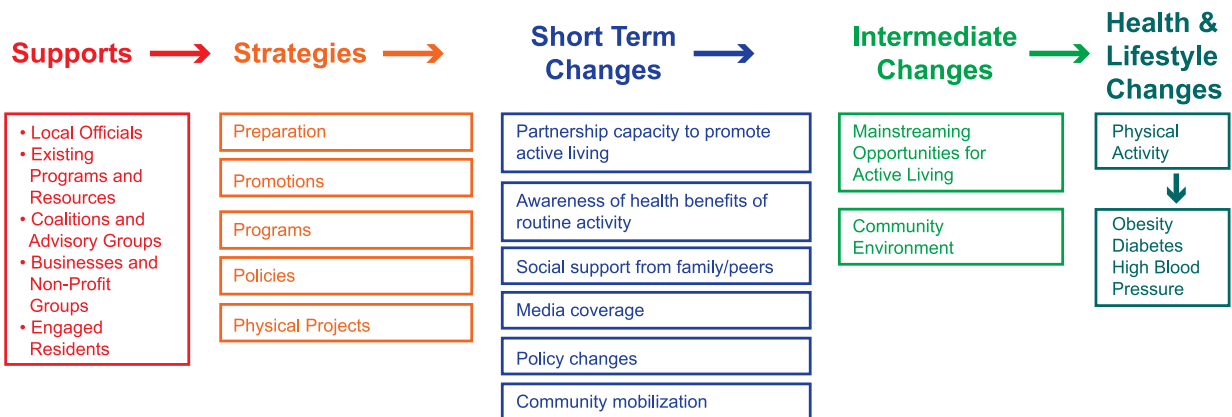
According to one Santa Ana newspaper, the problem was not that kids did not want to be outside, it was that they could not. Parents were afraid to let their kids play outside for fear of gang violence. The school district physical education program was so severely understaffed that one physical education teacher served 35 schools.¹ The streets of some Santa Ana neighborhoods lacked sidewalks, while some of the parks were filled with trash and graffiti. Perhaps because of these barriers for physical activity, more and more kids, particularly Latinos, were overweight or obese. A motivated group of organizations and individuals identified a solution to address these issues: active living.

“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 Active Living in Santa Ana (ALISA) partnership received a five-year, \$200,000 grant as part of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Active Living by Design national program (www.activelivingbydesign.org). By advocating for changes in community design, specifically land use, transportation, parks, trails, and greenways, the Active Living by Design initiative intended to make it easier for people to be active in their daily routines.²

“Programs like these are really good ways to motivate others and give them hope and let them know that sometimes you have to be patient, but eventually you will get what you want. What you want is to live in a safe area where your kids grow up ...and they don’t know violence, they do not know bad stuff, but the more beautiful side of things.”
-Partner

The Active Living by Design 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 the Active Living in Santa Ana partnership to promote healthy lifestyles that included safety, unity, and the enjoyment of physical activity.

Active Living by Design Community Action Model



“When we say we want to promote a healthy lifestyle, it’s not just about what people eat. It’s about safety, unity, and having fun. That’s what health is.” -Partner

¹ Liddane, L. “Creating a fit city: Project ALISA promotes active living in Santa Ana.” The Orange County Register. 10 Oct 2004.

² 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.

Through the leadership of the Active Living in Santa Ana (ALISA) partnership and strong community and political support, the Active Living by Design (ALbD) initiative had great success in addressing active living issues in Santa Ana. The passion, commitment, and collaboration of the numerous partners, community members, and government officials resulted in significant changes in Santa Ana to create a safe, more inviting community in which to be active. Many of the partners incorporated active living principles into their work outside of the partnership, and some made institutional changes to reflect their commitment. A number of local policy makers and government officials also committed to promoting and incorporating principles of active living in their organizations and responsibilities.

“I think that Active Living In Santa Ana is not only a benefit for the adults but for the little ones. And, it’s possible to show them at an early age so they can work with us and develop leadership and they continue with this in the future.”
-Community member

Santa Ana

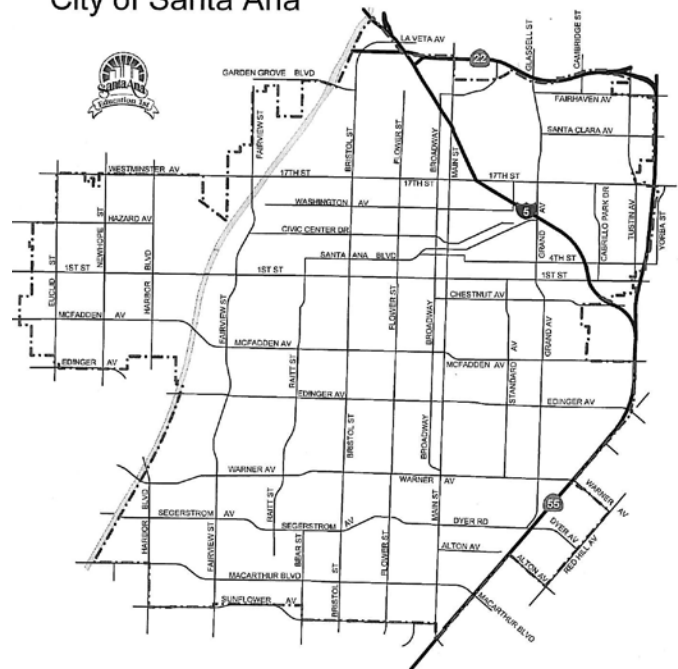
With over 330,000 residents and many undocumented Hispanic immigrants, Santa Ana has four times as many residents per square mile than all of Orange County. The city is demographically unique in that the Hispanic and foreign-born population percentages are significantly above the state average, while the median age and level of education are significantly below the state average. In 2007, approximately 25% of Santa Ana residents were below the federal poverty line, and the median household income was \$53,000. Obesity is a significant health issue in Santa Ana with almost 80% of adults as overweight or obese and 36% of children as overweight.

The ALbD project targeted residents, employees, employers, youth, families, and older adults in the Diamond District. In this particular area, 99% of the 35,000 residents are Hispanic.

Despite thriving businesses and government offices, the area represents the poorest section of the county. Ninety-five percent of children receive free or reduced price meals at school. In addition, the percentage of children achieving proper fitness levels is considerably lower than the rest of the county.

Because partners were already interested in obesity, the Project Director and other leaders focused on helping partners recognize the signs of an inactive community and learn to change the way in which they interact with the environment.

City of Santa Ana



“I think that everybody saw it... in their own neighborhoods, in their own inner actions... they saw it in their communities. The primary method of getting them up to speed was to help them to recognize what they were seeing and to not ignore the signs that they saw on a day-to-day basis. We really made them think about what they see and how they interact with their community.” -Staff

With the mission of having all residents and workers accumulate 30 minutes of daily activity and all children accumulate 60 minutes of daily activity, obesity-prevention advocates developed the Active Living in Santa Ana (ALISA) partnership. Using the 5P Model, ALISA aimed to develop a sustainable partnership to create strategies and resources supporting:

1. grassroots organizing and advocacy,
2. initiation and implementation of policies relating to the use of school sites, businesses, and faith-based organizations for physical activity,
3. development of strategies to reduce barriers to physical fitness including connecting of trails and improving safety, and
4. enhancement and expansion of existing marketing efforts for active living.

Overall, the partnership stressed the importance of identifying roles and responsibilities for all partners as well as understanding the underlying issues that affect physical activity (e.g., safety, crime, lack of resources).

Preparation

Partnership

Prior to the ALbD grant, many partners were already meeting informally about the local obesity epidemic. When the grant was announced, the partners recognized an opportunity to develop a formal, coordinated effort focused specifically on physical activity, social capital, and physical changes. The local YMCA felt that the ALbD initiative aligned with its mission and goals and expressed an interest in serving as the lead agency. Working with JKH Consulting and the Santa Ana Development Agency, which organizes grassroots efforts, community interventions, and volunteer programs, the YMCA submitted a proposal and served as lead agency for the ALbD grant. Later, Latino Health Access took over as lead agency given their strong ties in the community.

“[The partnership] was put together basically on the idea that there were these issues that were in place, the obesity rates were going up, etc. So we wanted to create a solution to that problem, and how we would be able to do it in a community such as Santa Ana given its particular dynamics as well as demographics. We worked to bring people to the table, create buy-in, develop ways to be able to continue communication, and to just basically get everybody onto the same page that they would be able to continue. My goal was to create something that would be able to sustain itself... in terms of making sure that the relationships were there for future projects to be developed and for different ways of thinking within each of the organizations that were participating...” -Staff

The founding partners identified other organizations and individuals essential to the success of an active living project, such as teachers, school district officials, health care and public health organizations, and city officials. Because of the partnership’s focus on physical projects and policy change, partners specifically sought decision makers in the community. Using tailored messages for persuasion, the partnership quickly expanded to include additional stakeholders. Some partners cited their connection to the community in which they grew up or their desire to improve their children’s environment as reasons for their involvement.

“Anytime you’re doing these kinds of programs, no matter what the community is...First you have to be very clear about what your goal is going to be and what it is that you’re trying to accomplish, what are you addressing, and keep it very sweet and simple. The other piece is you have to identify all of the key stakeholders, whether or not you have powers to reach them, you have to identify the key stakeholders and start pruning them to figure out which ones you’re going to be able to get to, which ones are critical, and which ones are not so critical, and how you’re going to get to key stakeholders that you don’t currently have connections with.” -Staff

ALISA partners worked to gain community support for their efforts by developing relationships and trust with pre-existing coalitions and grassroots organizations. Partners used COM-LINK, a group of leaders from the 50+ neighborhood associations, as a vehicle for engaging the community and providing the infrastructure for training and education on active living issues. The partnership worked with the City of Santa Ana's District Managers to foster support and leadership from these neighborhood associations.

At the beginning of the ALbD project, the ALISA partnership held a series of retreats under the direction of the initial Project Director. The partners first established ground rules for dealing with conflict and diversity of opinion. The retreat allowed for disagreement, but not in a way that would damage the relationships among partners. As a result, partners addressed issues that had impeded cooperation in the past. By working through past issues, the partnership was able to focus on community improvement for active living.

“I think in the end [the retreat] really did build up relationships and people were able to get past a lot of the issues. The main thing that I kept [saying to] them was... as long as we continue to hash out these old issues and can't figure out ways of communicating with one another in a fruitful way, we're never going to be able to address the real problems that are out there. I think we're all around the table and spending this amount of time together because we care about the issue that we're actually here to address.” -Staff

In February 2004, the ALISA founding partners formed a steering committee responsible for monitoring progress and managing partnership activities. For the first six months, partners held meetings frequently to solidify their relationships and make structural and organizational decisions. After this start-up period, partners began meeting quarterly. Committee updates and strategic planning for ongoing projects and upcoming events were routinely conducted during these meetings.

Partners began each year of the grant period with a planning retreat during which they formulated their yearly work plan and goals. Monthly e-mail updates for professional events related to active living were sent to partners to encourage them to attend workshops, conferences, and trainings in order to gain additional skills and resources for promoting active living.

In 2006, the partnership established three additional committees, or task forces, that were responsible for specific projects. The Santa Ana Health and Fitness Task Force concentrated on assisting with and promoting activities led by the city, including walk-a-thons, fitness fairs, and team sports challenges. Its purpose was to ensure that ALISA would be at the forefront of what was happening in the city and to engage community members in the partnership's efforts.

The second task force was the District Wellness Committee, led by the Santa Ana United School District. Members of this task force included Latino Health Access and the Orange County Health Care Agency. The main purpose of this group was to identify school wellness issues and to recruit school principals and physical education teachers to work in collaboration with the partnership to increase physical activity opportunities for children.

A Built Environment Task Force was also established to focus on improving the built environment for active living.

The table below lists all partners involved with Active Living in Santa Ana.

Members of the Active Living in Santa Ana partnership	
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Diabetes Association • Cal State University-Fullerton Center for Childhood Obesity Prevention • Children’s Hospital of Orange County • Health Care Foundation of Orange County • Hoag Hospital • Latino Health Access* • Nutrition and Physical Activity Committee Orange County • Orange County Health Care Agency • University of California-Irvine Child Injury & Traffic Safety Research Group
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cal State University-Fullerton College of Business • Marketing and Public Relations • Santa Ana United School District
Parks & Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Santa Ana Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Agency • YMCA of Orange County*
Urban Design, Planning & Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Santa Ana <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department of Engineering - Department of Traffic Safety - Planning Division • Santa Ana Development Agency • University of California-Irvine Department of Planning, Policy, and Design
Community Leaders, Policy- & Decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Managers • Santa Ana City Council
Other Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Santa Ana <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department of Community Development - Police Department - Department of Public Works - Neighborhood Resource Network • County of Orange Community Services
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Access
Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment, Science & Art, Inc • JKH Consulting, Inc • SHEA Homes
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orange County Register
Community & Faith-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orange County Community Congregations Organization • Warwick Community Center • Washington Walking Club

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

Strengths and Challenges

ALISA partners were responsive and supportive of the efforts to make opportunities for physical activity more available and accessible to Santa Ana residents. Staff, partners, and community members identified a number of partnership strengths:

- The partnership influenced city policies by working with policy makers.
- The lead agencies and partners had high levels of energy, enthusiasm, and passion.
- Community members became involved as key staff on the project.
- The partnership made a commitment to being proactive in creating projects that benefitted the community.
- The formation of committees and task forces led to a more equitable division of labor.
- Partners demonstrated the ability to begin work quickly.
- The synergistic relationship between partners allowed them to accomplish more through collaboration.
- The involvement of key decision makers led to interactions with city officials that otherwise would not occur.
- Partners consistently attended meetings and made active living and the ALISA partnership a priority in their work.

“Everyone really does show up for the meetings and they sort of prioritize the time that ALISA asks them for. That’s getting them together which they normally wouldn’t otherwise.” -Staff

“I want to mention that we have been very proactive, and I believe that is one of the things that other communities should do: get together, form a core group, be very committed, and work with their government agencies. I believe that government agencies are waiting for the community to grow and ask for their help. We have seen a very positive response from them... I think that is sending a very strong message to the agencies and the city of Santa Ana about who we are and what kind of changes we expect to see in the future.” -Community member

“[One partner] assumed the position of Executive Director of Parks and Recreation at the very start of ALISA... Likewise, [another partner] joined the City Council... Through [their] efforts there was a much more formal recognition of ALISA by the administration of the city and the health board. That opened other doors and other channels and opportunities. ALISA was sort of catapulted in that process to a level that it was able to function... a lot higher level than would have been possible [without them].” -Partner

“[Building relationships with the community] is one of the easier parts for Latino Health Access because we hire most of our staff from the community, so any people that sort of rise up as very strong leaders or volunteers for us in the neighborhoods, eventually most of them get hired by us. We have the advantage of having staff that is [part of the] community, so we can call upon that at any time and they’re very well networked. It’s just kind of a natural thing that we do here.” -Staff

ALISA staff, partners, and community members also identified several challenges faced by the partnership throughout the grant period:

- The partnership had difficulty balancing the 5P strategies, tending to become too focused on programs.
- There were disagreements with regard to work plans and goals because of individual organizational interests and politics.
- The partnership was largely unsuccessful at recruiting local businesses.
- It was difficult to find dedicated individuals or representatives to replace former partners.
- A lack of early buy-in from key partners stalled progress.
- A single organization was responsible for all policy advocacy efforts.
- It was challenging to gather community members for reasons not directly related to schools or the city.
- Community members' attendance at partnership meetings was limited by time constraints (e.g., working two jobs).
- Implementation of activities was left to the lead agency and staff because of undefined roles for other partners.
- The need for change was sometimes outweighed by the effort it took to convince the community and the government.
- ALISA had difficulty engaging partners who did not receive funding support.

“I think sometimes [non-funded partners] look to us... since we are directing the group. They’ll approve or suggest things for the work plan, but it’s up to us to actually go ahead and do it because we’re most involved with it. It’s hard to get the rest of the group to participate in some of those activities. Just like any collaborative, the people that are convening it, or the ones that have the paid staff to convene it... a lot of times the work load gets delegated over to them, so it’s kind of tough to get non-funded partners to want to pick up the slack.” -Staff

Leadership and Champions

The Santa Ana partnership experienced several leadership changes throughout the course of the ALbD grant. The YMCA of Orange County served as the lead agency and funded a Project Director for the duration of the ALbD grant. In 2006, as the partnership began to focus more heavily on advocacy for policy and environment change and the YMCA faced budget cuts and reorganization. ALISA developed a sub-contract with partner Latino Health Access to coordinate implementation activities for the remainder of the grant period. An experienced community advocacy organization, Latino Health Access had an established presence in Santa Ana. Although there were some hesitations about its ability to remain objective despite its strong ties to the community, it proved to be an asset in gaining community support.

When Latino Health Access became the lead agency, a Project Coordinator was hired to assist the Project Director in organizing the partnership and implementing the work plans. Interns also assisted with planning and implementation efforts, although there were inherent challenges with turnover and continuity. Latino Health Access provided key organizational support for the partnership throughout the grant period. Its Board of Directors was supportive and engaged in the project and maintained communication with staff. Additionally, critical volunteer positions were institutionalized and converted into paid positions at Latino Health Access (e.g., joint use director, wellness coordinator).

One of the early champions for the ALISA project was a City Councilman. He became a role model within the community by commuting to work using his bicycle. Having the leadership and support of a policy maker was essential to both the formation of the partnership and the establishment of a strong relationship with the city. After the champion left the community, the partners continued to work with the city council by cultivating a relationship with his replacement.

“When [ALISA] was founded it was really under the pushing of the former city councilman. He played a really big role in working to make sure we got the grant [and that] the collaborative was there... When he was on city council, he would actually show up to every ALISA meeting. Having that kind of leadership from a city council member is what put it over the edge and got it routinized to the point where the head of Community Resources and the head of Parks and Rec were used to coming and they just carried it on.” -Staff

Together with the City Councilman, the Executive Director of Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Agency played a key role in making positive changes and inspiring the partners to work to their fullest potential. The Executive Director worked very closely with the City Councilman to implement changes in public policy and awareness of the need for change. The Executive Director's involvement was seen as crucial to the success of the partnership.

The original Project Coordinator, an employee at Cal State - Fullerton, was also an important champion for the partnership. She was initially sub-contracted as a consultant to assist in grant writing and later played a key role in forming the partnership model and addressing key issues.

“[The former Project Coordinator] used what I consider to be really extraordinary, almost inspirational, leadership... She was very persuasive, she's very charismatic, she's comfortable... and most importantly [she made] a connection between what we were doing and everything that's happening in California. Through her efforts, ALISA became a main line to garner additional support.” -Partner

Funding and Resources

In addition to the ALbD grant, partners reached out to a number of local, state, and national funders to introduce ALISA and to expand the amount of financial and other resources available to support the initiative. The partnership began applying for supplemental grants early in the grant period. Significant funding was received through the Healthy Eating Active Communities initiative of the California Endowment. ALISA leveraged \$3,766,000 in funding and support from the following sources:

- Carol M. White Physical Education Program
- Childhood Obesity Intervention Center (congressional appropriation)
- Healthcare Foundation of Orange County
- Kaboom
- Kaiser Permanente
- Orange County Community Foundation
- Santa Ana United School District Nutrition Network

In 2005, while ALISA served as an advisory group, the partnership adopted a fundraising strategy in which individual partners received funding directly through grants and other services. The partnership also began working with the City of Santa Ana and the Santa Ana Development Agency to discuss and apply for funding. For example, ALISA helped the City of Santa Ana apply for funds for pedestrian walkways and an extended bike system.

Despite their success in leveraging additional funds, partners were unable to secure funds for one of their main objectives: a joint use agreement. The partnership identified three viable options to secure funds: a bond measure, a benefit tax that would require managers to pay between \$10 and \$15 a year on all property owners in Santa Ana, and an increase in the city sales tax. While the sales tax seemed to be the most promising, it also presented unique political challenges as other groups also sought sales tax increases to support their own work (e.g., the Police Association).

Community Supports and Challenges

Understanding the history and context of Santa Ana is vital for the appreciation of the impact that policy change, physical projects, promotions, and programs had on the residents and their opportunities for active living.

Santa Ana is home to a large undocumented population. One of the most significant challenges to working with this population is understanding the cultural perspective of obesity and how to address it while remaining respectful of cultural viewpoints. In addition, illegal residents tend to be apprehensive about becoming involved in city sponsored programs for fear of deportation.

“The primary challenge in Santa Ana was that we are talking about a highly undocumented population [that is] primarily Spanish-speaking. One of the biggest challenges [was that] we had to come up with new and different ways of making connections because the very basic thing was [that] we had to gain trust from the community.” -Staff

Because many Santa Ana residents are lower income, they often rely on walking for transportation. In the community, walking is associated with being poor. Partners aimed to work with community members to begin to change these negative attitudes toward walking and other forms of active living.

“There’s a lot of walking occurring...They’re walking to a bus stop or they’re walking to... the corner or the store or to school. Because of the low income, there’s a lot of walking except they don’t understand [that] it’s something to be proud of. There’s a different perception and challenge there is [to] change the attitude. We should congratulate ourselves because we’re walking and that’s good for our health.” -Partner

Perhaps the most significant community challenge was the perception that Santa Ana was unsafe related to high rates of crime and gang activity. Most community residents felt that it was safer to drive than to walk, particularly when alone. Robberies occurred frequently, in their own homes and yards residents could be assaulted. Many children walked to school but were not necessarily allowed to play outside without supervision because of the safety concerns. Residents were afraid to tell the police when such incidents occurred for fear of retribution or deportation. In addition, some residents felt that the police were not adequately responsive.



“If you’re in the car you’re safe but if you’re on the street, adults and children alike, it’s just dangerous and you really have to watch out.” -Community member

“People are afraid to tell the police officers this is going on. You have to tell them. You have to make people aware. Or else it is not going to change.” -Community member

Gangs were a main reason for safety concerns. The city had approximately 80 gangs, comprised primarily of high school-aged boys. ALISA partners and community members viewed the ALbD grant as an opportunity to engage at-risk youth in physical activity programs, such as soccer, to provide positive interactions and an avenue for education and outreach.

“The public health challenge with regards to active living for young people is not just obesity. It’s actually death by guns, it’s also crime and gangs, and so sports, in my opinion, is a great solution for young kids, low income kids, boys that are the natural type for gangs. You end up keeping them... busy, doing sports without supervision, which is key.” -Partner

In 2006, the city passed an injunction for a two-square-mile portion of Santa Ana called the “safety zone.” This zone included five schools, a city park, and a golf course. During the year prior to these regulations, crime within this two-mile area included 2 murders, 15 firearms violations, 12 felony assaults, 28 robberies, and 123 stolen vehicles. The city injunction created regulations including a 10:00pm curfew for youth, the prohibition of associating with known gang members and wearing gang attire, and a ban on drinking intended to minimize Santa Ana gang activity. In the four months following the injunction, crime decreased by 46%.

Safety concerns of the residents of Santa Ana were also related to the physical condition of the community. Graffiti, in particular tagging by gangs, and trash were found throughout parks and other public areas while vacant lots invited crime, the city resisted investing in short-term changes because the lots were slated for future redevelopment. Community residents expressed interest in adding benches, lighting, and trees to increase perceptions of safety and promote activity.

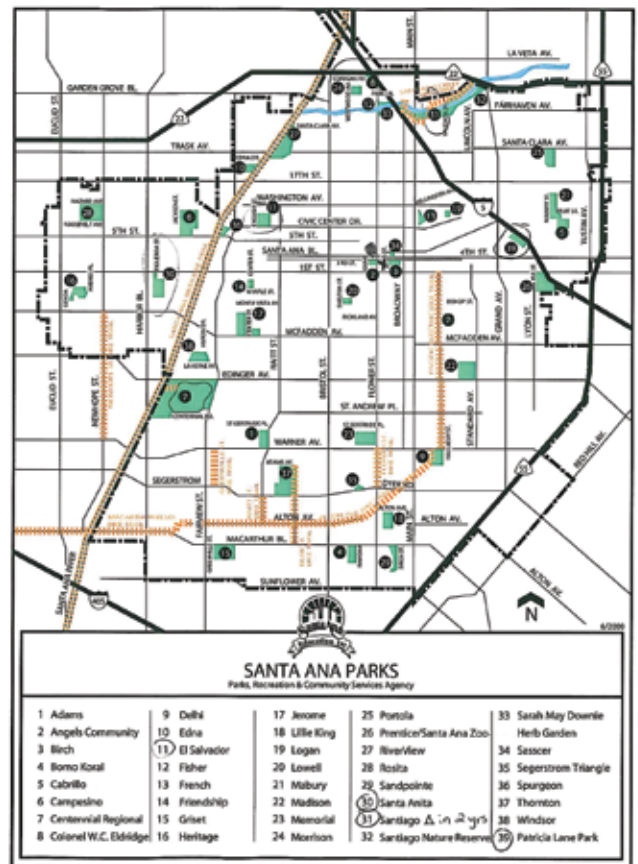
“We have a mission to see this as a very nice place where people won’t be afraid to get out even at night...with benches, lighting, more trees, more signs with ways to exercise.” -Community member

Santa Ana is an urban city with many of the usual environmental restrictions that hinder active living. Narrow roads prohibit bike lanes, and there is little, if any, space for the development of new parks or recreational facilities. There are only 0.9 acres of park space per 1000 people in Santa Ana, compared to Orange County’s average of 3 acres of park per 1000 residents. There is no space to create new parks or greenspace within the community without demolishing old buildings however, demolition is cost-prohibitive.

“[In Santa Ana] there is really no space to construct... [ALISA is focusing] on the idea of joint use and then opening up the space that we do have. That’s where you are going to see the most improvement or change.” -Staff

Santa Ana has a history of successful grassroots organizations. Neighborhood associations and community leaders played a large role in mobilizing resources and support for community improvement. Community members were motivated to advocate for change and to work toward improvement. Some of the neighborhood groups were more proactive than others. ALISA’s efforts and the relationships between community members and the City of Santa Ana benefited from the presence and involvement of these groups.

The City of Santa Ana was supportive of ALISA and prioritized health and fitness within various departments. For example, the Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Agency changed its mission statement to reflect active living principles and language. Other agencies showed a significant commitment to active living principles, including the City of Santa Ana, Santa Ana United School District, and Orange County Health Care Agency.



The involvement of policy makers was critical for the early success of ALISA. Two of the most supportive city council members left their elected offices during the course of the grant. Developing and informing new political allies was difficult. Although losing key political supporters was a challenge in Santa Ana, the staff fostered positive relationships and gained additional support from the new local policy makers.

“So we sat down with them, walked them through it, walked them through the maps that show the health disparities as well as park inequities. So it was really about educating them and getting them involved and we’ve seen a lot of change in terms of the discussions that they hold. Whether it was in town hall that they’ve made or in re-election campaigns that they’ve had but they’re talking about joint use and open space and the tie between health and public safety. So we’ve seen that as a huge benefit in terms of picking up our arguments and moving forward with them.” -Staff

Community Assessment

ALISA’s success was due in part to community assessment. Throughout the grant period, partners used focus groups, surveys, and mapping projects to better understand the needs of their community.

In 2004, partners planned and held a number of focus groups with public housing developments in order to build trust and learn how to effectively communicate with community members. Two of these groups later formed Community Action Teams to organize and support physical activity events and programming. A focus group was also held with COM-LINK, a group of neighborhood association leaders, to gauge property owners’ interest in joint use agreements with area schools.

In 2006, ALISA used a questionnaire with business managers and owners in order to receive input and opinions regarding the role of businesses for increasing opportunities for active living in Santa Ana.

“In Santa Ana, we had to first gain [the community’s] trust, so we went in and did focus groups and listened to what they had to say. A lot of agencies and organizations are constantly trying to get information to them, but nobody can get through. What’s going to make us different? How are we going to be perceived differently? Our first steps had to be very carefully planned. We went with organizations that the community trusted, number one. Number two, we went in and did focus groups so we got feedback directly from the people that we were trying to get information out to and participation from and involved them in the entire process from beginning to end.” -Staff

The partnership also created maps of projected bike paths and existing and pending community centers in order to visualize the availability and accessibility of active living facilities. ALISA’s Built Environment Task Force developed and used walkability checklists to assess the road and sidewalk conditions of the most frequently used routes throughout the community of Santa Ana. For example, students at Garfield Elementary completed a Walk to School Day audit to assess safety and walkability around their school. Partners explored ways to communicate findings with City Planning and Public Works.

Policies and Physical Projects

Policies and physical projects were major foci of the ALISA partnership, particularly in the final two years of the grant. Much of the partnership's efforts focused on obtaining a joint use agreement between the school district and the city. Partners, specifically the City of Santa Ana Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Agency, worked to expand access to places to be physically active by making physical improvements to the community. Policy influences and physical projects, related partner, staff, and community implementation activities, and associated challenges are described as follows.

► **Joint Use Agreement**

- Partners focused much of their efforts on obtaining a joint use agreement between the Santa Ana United School District and the City of Santa Ana in order to open school facilities to the community during after school hours and summers.
- In previous years, discussion regarding joint use stalled because of concerns related to the cost of maintenance, such as “wear and tear” on the equipment and liability and safety issues.
- A proposed joint use ballot measure stated that the City of Santa Ana would provide a continuous flow of funding in return for the school district's willingness to open playgrounds and other facilities to the public and allowed the Parks, Recreations, and Community Services agency to offer physical activity opportunities at the schools.
- ALISA representatives from Latino Health Access met with each City Council member to discuss support for the ballot measure.
- To establish community support for this ballot measure, ALISA coordinated a public opinion poll.

“The idea is if the schools already there have fields and playgrounds, why don't you open them as parks after school and program them as parks. There are many different issues that occur. It's not the school district's responsibility to provide recreational opportunities after school. So how do you then get the school district to open up as parks? The issue of maintenance of the fields, the issue of the restrooms, and a variety of different things have to be dealt with. It comes down to resources [and coordination].” -Partner

► **Joint Use Pilot Projects**

- In the first year of the ALbD grant, ALISA initiated a pilot joint use project at Roosevelt Elementary School in which parent volunteers monitored the schoolyard in the evenings and on weekends while the community used the facilities.
- In the last year of the ALbD grant, Godinez High School was built in Centennial Park with approval from Parks, Recreation, and Community Services in return for use of school facilities.
- The City of Santa Ana's Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Agency hired a joint use coordinator to help coordinate parks programming with the schools.

“We do have a joint use agreement with Godinez High School which is the newest high school. It's built on Centennial Park. We gave the land to the district so they could build the high school... In return, the agreement is that we get to use the high school and the facilities from 6pm-10pm Monday through Friday when they are not using it, and Saturday and Sunday.” -Staff

► **Task Forces**

- The Santa Ana River Task Force was created in 2005 to determine how to protect and utilize the river and surrounding greenspace for physical activity.
- Parks, Recreation, and Community Services served as the lead for the Task Force, which consisted of business leaders, community representatives, neighborhood associations, and members of City Council.
- A vision plan was completed in 2006 and called for the restoration of the natural river corridor, the enhancement of environmental, recreational, and economic opportunities, and an increase in community pride, connectivity, and quality of life. Community organizations and city departments used this plan to support design changes, such as the inclusion of bicycle trails, horse trails, and pocket parks and the completion of the Golden Loop Trail.
- Also in 2005, the Santa Ana Health and Fitness Task Force was established by the City Council to create opportunities for physical activity and other healthy behaviors.
- The YMCA of Orange County received a Pioneering Healthier Communities grant from the Y of the USA for which they developed a county-level task force.

“There was a taskforce created by the mayor and council to look at how to include the Santa Ana River...with regards to recreation, with regards to the environment... they wanted to protect the trail and increase the park space around the river. The Santa Ana River Vision Plan was then adopted by the Santa Ana City Council and it identifies all the areas of opportunity to solicit money and to focus and develop... additional park space around the river.” -Partner

“The health and wellness task force...meets quarterly, and it’s actually had a lot of growth in terms of community participation, so it has the heads of different neighborhood associations and different walking club associations that the city has initiated. So they have grown a lot and they’re doing a lot of great things in terms of getting community participation in the health and wellness task force.” -Staff

► **Golden Loop Trail**

- The completion of the Golden Loop Trail was prioritized in order to connect Santa Ana’s bikeways and walkways to form a continuous 40-mile path around the city, providing access to activity centers, waterways, and a national forest.
- During the ALbD grant, ALISA partners focused on a plan to connect the east-west Santiago Creek Trail to the north-south Santa Ana River Trail.
- ALISA partners succeeded in making changes to enhance the existing portions of the Golden Loop trail, including repair of the asphalt, improved lighting, tree plantings, improved landscaping around the playground, litter and graffiti removal, and construction of the Santa Ana Wildlife and Watershed Center.
- Funding and approval by the City to extend the trail was obtained and the Parks, Recreation, and Community Service department planned to complete construction over the next few years.



“I think we’ll see a huge increase [in trail usage when the Golden Loop is complete]. In fact, just as [the City of] Orange has added segments upstream we’ve seen an increase in our area. Eventually the idea is that you’ll be able to take it all the way to the national forest... then that will make connections where you can then take it to the Santa Ana River upstream and make it a large loop of maybe 40 miles.” -Partner

► Community Clean-Up

“These people are awesome. They are really, really open to a lot of suggestions, like when I bring up the idea... let’s pick up the trash on the bike trail... we can influence others... they’ll see us picking up trash. They will say, “Hey, this is a clean area.” ... I have been seeing a lot less litter since we have been picking up trash.” -Partner

- The Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Agency worked with community volunteers and organizations to enhance and clean neighborhood parks and trails.
- Examples of these efforts include over 400 interfaith volunteers planting trees and cleaning Centennial Park, Medtronic employees planting trees at Bomo Koral Park, a watershed clean-up event held at Centennial Park, Santiago Park, and Spurgeon Park, and a Green and Clean Team beautifying the Golden Trail East bike path.
- Partners found residents were open to suggestions on how to improve parks and trails and encouraged to keep these facilities clean.

► Santiago Park Redevelopment

- The Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Agency made it a goal to enhance Santiago Park, a popular community destination with a variety of recreational features, by replacing outdated facilities and adding new opportunities for activity.
- The Santiago Park redevelopment master plan included replacing non-native trees with native species, encouraging natural regeneration of the habitat, incorporating adventure-oriented facilities into the existing playground, recreating a Native American village, and using existing facilities as educational tools.

City of Santa Ana
Parks, Recreation and Community Services Agency

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Tillamook Cheese
Adopt-A-Park
Project “Clean-up”

at Madison Park Bike Trail

information

When: July 21, 2007

Registration: 8:30 a.m.

Place: Madison Park Bike Trail
On the corner of Hobart St & Bike Trail. Six blocks West from Madison Elementary

Clean-up time: 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Lunch: 12:30 p.m.
for volunteers

For more information contact:
Jeannie G. Jurado, Recreation Supervisor
(714) 571 - 4251

“[Santiago Park has] the best two slides in all of Orange County... It was the one thing the neighborhood said to us, and all the people that we’ve talked to while doing development for this area, “Those slides better stay!” What we want to do is recreate a playground here that meets the goals of the rest of the site. So, instead of just jungle gyms and swings, we want to have something that’s a little more adventure-oriented, outdoor recreation-oriented. We talked with groups like REI and people like that and they have a real strong interest in coming into an area like this and helping us develop things. From our perspective, we also want it to be an educational experience, so we’ve talked about maybe recreating a Native American village or using the slides to teach about water sheds and things like that, or having a tree house and we can talk about what animals might live in the different layers of forest. So we’re going to rebuild a playground but it’s got to have this adventure theme and this ability to teach about the greater goals of the site.” -Partner

► Other Policies and Physical Projects

“I think that the [emphasis on] physical projects is primarily because of what RWJF and ALbD designed in the beginning. There was a real big emphasis on making sure there was physical space. Given the density of Santa Ana, that was a definite calling point for us. We knew we needed to do something about the physical space, so that was always on the high priority list.” -Staff

- ALISA partners were involved in many other improvements to the physical environment of Santa Ana, led by the Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Agency, including installing artificial turf at soccer fields to allow year-round use, installing a new lining at the El Salvador Pool, renovating the El Salvador Center, developing two Kaboom playgrounds, planting trees in a number of parks and along trails, covering the walls along trails with ivy to prevent graffiti, and adding bike racks to new development areas.
- Partners also worked to create other policy changes that encouraged active living, including advocating for apartment complexes to allow walking groups and individuals engaged in other activities to congregate on their grounds. In addition they worked with a local junior high school to develop a health facility onsite that provided nutrition counseling, physical activity programming, and an open gym.
- ALISA used a variety of promotional methods to increase their reach, through training residents as peer counselors/ community health workers, [posting point-of-choice prompts to promote physical activity among children,] publishing a monthly newsletter that contains health information and community events, and utilizing the ALbD website to share information and photographs with the community.

Challenges and Successes

ALISA faced several challenges in developing, implementing, and sustaining their policy and physical projects efforts. For example, the Santa Ana River Trail cuts through three counties and many different municipalities. Because each community had ownership over their section of the trail, it was difficult to make comprehensive improvements. In addition, expansion of the trail required gaining approval from private property owners and Orange County, as well as the general support of local businesses and residents.

As the city and the school district began to develop joint use policies, ALISA encountered a number of challenges such as communication, parking, maintenance, scheduling between school and community use, and turnover in school administration. To address these issues, a technical advisory group of city and school district officials was formed and met monthly.

In part because of their close ties with a City Councilman who consistently championed their efforts, ALISA partners were able to achieve much success in their policy and physical project efforts. In addition, the Santa Ana Unified School District and the Orange County Health Care Agency proved invaluable in getting support from other agencies. ALISA received considerable volunteer support from the community to improve neighborhood parks and trails.

“The Santa Ana Unified School District...has been increasingly involved in the built environment work that a lot of these collaboratives are involved with. So they’re really about facilitating and convening and providing data and helping make arguments. And I think that’s helped to get certain agencies on board...” -Staff

Although partners described their policy and physical project efforts as successful, they also identified challenges in creating and implementing change:

- The political process was slow and inconsistent.
- Turnover in political office led to a need to educate and engage new policy makers.
- Taxpayers potentially perceived tax increases as a burden even if they supported the efforts benefiting from the increased revenue.
- Most non-profit partner organizations lacked awareness or skills for lobbying.
- There was a general lack of funds for physical projects.
- ALISA experienced tension at times between an agency led approach to programming versus a more facilitative approach to build citizen participation and leadership.

“Even though it’s very easy, very legal [to lobby for rights], they’re all very afraid. That’s a whole other level of education that needs to happen in the non-profit sector, where these boards get educated into their lobby rights and responsibilities and how they can do it and to what level. And they need to get more comfortable doing it.” -Staff

Programs and Promotions

Promotional and programmatic efforts of the ALISA project helped build support for the policy and physical projects by increasing awareness of active living. ALISA partners were involved in a number of programs that provided opportunities for the community to engage in physical activity. Promotions and programs, related partner, staff, and community implementation activities, and associated strengths and challenges are listed as follows.

▶ **Safe and Active Living United Districts (SALUD)**

- Safe and Active Living United Districts (SALUD), a health and wellness program funded in 2005 by an ALBD Special Opportunities grant and implemented by Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Agency, was created to encourage community members to remain active and engaged in their neighborhoods.
- Five districts were initially established with two additional districts added in 2006.
- Participants were recruited at health fairs and other community events and matched with the closest district based on their zip code.
- Residents were invited to participate in various fitness and educational activities as part SALUD but were also expected to help ALISA partners identify and address active living barriers in the neighborhood.
- The main component of SALUD was to create walking clubs, which have grown in number and expanded from meeting once a week to three times a week.

“[The Madison Park Neighborhood] had a lot of issues like potholes. They do not feel safe in their own neighborhood. Our executive director... started coming to the meetings and said, “What can we do?” He came up with this new concept... SALUD. We are trying to do something about it but you have to help us too. So we are providing these walking clubs but you also have to help us.” -Partner

“I used to walk alone and there would be people just sort of hanging out and laying around. I didn’t feel comfortable, I didn’t feel safe walking alone. Someone told me about this place and I came here, and now I have a group of people that help me.” -Community member

▶ **Walking Maps**

- In conjunction with SALUD, Parks, Recreation, and Community Service worked directly with the five neighborhoods and the Santa Ana Health and Fitness Task Force to develop and distribute community walking maps in four neighborhoods: Madison Park, Santa Anita, El Salvador, and Jerome.
- These maps displayed walking paths with distance measurements and calories burned as well as historical information about the neighborhoods.
- Over 22,000 English and Spanish copies of a Golden Trail East map created by ALISA were printed and distributed in 2007.



► **School-based Promotions**

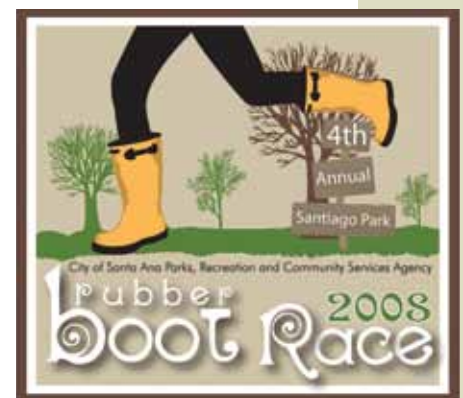
- In 2007, partners worked with seven elementary schools to provide comprehensive education to 5th graders regarding physical fitness and health. The education sessions were tailored using information gathered by Fitnessgram, a tool that measures aerobic capacity, body composition, muscle strength and endurance, and flexibility.

► **School-based Programs**

- ALISA partners implemented programs in schools that targeted both children and parents.
- In 2004, the Santa Ana United School District received a \$1.5 million Carol White Physical Education Program grant that provided funding for school-based programming. ALISA partners led the writing of this proposal, and the YMCA of Orange County implemented the curriculum in the schools because the school district lacked adequate physical education staff.
- Over 300 elementary school teachers were trained to lead 200 minutes of physical activity every two weeks in order to comply with California law.

► **Community Events and Presentations**

- ALISA took an active role in promoting active living principles throughout Santa Ana by planning, organizing, or participating in a variety of community events:
 - Celebrate Santa Ana hosted by the Community Development Resource Network
 - Rubber Boot Race, a two-mile walk/run
 - American Diabetes Association Walk-a-Thon and Health Fair
 - Madison Park Neighborhood Walk-a-Thon and Health Fair
 - Santa Ana Nutrition Fitness Fair, a city-sponsored event
 - World of Work College Career Fair
 - City youth basketball finals and awards
 - Santa Ana Youth Expo
 - Family Fun Days
 - Santa Ana Rotary 2K, 5K, and 10K Runs
 - Lyon Street Health Fair
 - Santa Ana certified farmers market annual Community Health and Resource Fair
 - Walk to School Day
 - Mayor's Fitness Awards
 - Mayor's Health Pick for Restaurants' Guide
 - Through these events, ALISA reached an estimated 30,000 residents each year. The mayor and several city council members attended a number of events to support active living.
 - In addition to community events, partners have promoted their work among the Santa Ana community by giving presentations to community, business, and government leaders, including COM-LINK participants, Santa Ana Chamber of Commerce, Santa Ana Civic Leadership, Santa Ana United School District principals, and Santa Ana City Council.
- ### ► **Other Efforts**
- Latino Health Access trained mothers to lead aerobics classes for other parents using facilities at three elementary schools.
 - The Lyon Street Kids Club began in 2006 as an eight-week course that met once a week for two hours of physical activity.



Challenges and Successes

Staff, partners, and community members felt the most beneficial aspect of ALISA's programs was that they involved the entire family. This allowed families to grow closer by spending quality time together and provided an opportunity for parents and other family members to serve as positive role models for younger children.

"We try to involve the family. That makes a big difference. We as parents, as adults, [set] a goal for [children] and they can get involved to do good within the community. That's a key point for this to be a success." -Partner

Community members and SALUD participants have shared several success stories, including weight loss, control of their diabetes and other chronic conditions, learning healthy ways to prepare foods, and building new friendships with other residents. Caring and motivating instructors have played a large role in the success of this program.

"The instructor is really great. She really knows how to motivate and keep [participants] engaged. I never thought that by dancing I would lose 6 pounds." -Community member

ALISA partners faced many challenges in designing and implementing effective programs and promotions, particularly with SALUD:

- The partnership was not able to hire and train neighborhood walking club leaders.
- Community members attendance was limited by work schedules and other daytime commitments.
- The community perceived walking as only a means of transportation.
- There was a shortage of Parks, Recreation, and Community Services staff to develop new groups.
- Programming was often dictated by cooperation from principals or community organizations rather than community needs.
- The physical education departments within the school district were understaffed.
- The partnership struggled with becoming too "program-heavy" and depleting their resources, financial and otherwise.

"It is difficult to motivate the people. I mentioned to you that this... is not a very affluent area, so there are a lot of social issues here... time [for physical activity] for these people won't be in their priorities." -Community member

"The challenge that I see is to get the population, in this case, young people, to be active, but also of course to be healthy and be with the awareness of the importance of being active... you all walk so much already, understand that that should be part of one's lifestyle because it's healthy, it contributes to health, so that's where that awareness has to count." -Partner

"Some of the challenges [for walking clubs] are... people have other priorities, you know, especially in Santa Ana where a lot of the families are very low income, and even if they lose an hour of work, that hour that they lost from work just affects them in a negative way. So, it's really hard to get people to just stick to the program." -Partner

"Everything started to get very program heavy and there was a lot of implementing that needed to happen. Basically it came down to time level and energy levels of people that were trying to look at multiple interests." -Staff

Sustainability

In their original grant proposal, partners envisioned having developed sufficient systems and resources to sustain the partnership after the five-year grant period. Partners met with their ALBD Project Officer specifically to discuss a plan for sustainability. In 2008, they received an 18-month grant from RWJF to continue their ALBD efforts with primary emphases on joint use policy and walkability. One of the main activities planned during this period was to share street audit information with the city Planning and Public Works department in order to influence the development of Complete Streets, Safe Routes to School, and other policies to influence walkability and open space.

Partners were also preparing a ballot measure for a citywide sales tax increase to support joint use that would generate approximately \$5 to \$7 million per year for maintenance and security. Sustainability funds would be used to continue coordinating discussions around joint use and to identify and recruit experienced organizations to assist in developing a strategic plan for opening a pilot project during the 2009-2010 school year.

ALISA's sustainability plan also included SALUD, the renovation of Thornton Bike Trail, enhancement of the MacArthur Boulevard and Santiago Park Trailheads, and the extension of the Santiago Creek Bike Trail.

“We’re going to continue [the SALUD program] forever. No matter what. That is what we want to do. As you can see, the neighborhood loves it. We will continue to do it even if ALISA is not here.” -Partner

ALISA intended to seek additional funding to support these efforts, as well as to provide for a staff member. Without someone to convene the partnership, many partners felt that it would dissolve because of the other commitments and time pressures on partners. However, partners also felt that individual organizations would continue to address active living issues as they relate to their mission and goals.

“If we can find a funder that would be willing to fund this collaborative, I think that [the partners] would [continue to be involved]. There needs to be funding to convene this group of people. This group of people is very unique insofar as that it has city staff from all different divisions and community partners, schools, and the county. But it requires some agency staff to physically call all these people and get them to a meeting at a time they can attend, with food, with a topic of some certain advocacy [effort] or policy that we all want advanced. If there’s no funding to pull all these people together, it could easily dissolve. I think everyone would just kind of fade out as they have in tons of other partnerships. If you don’t have someone to convene the people, the people don’t convene themselves because they have a million and one other objectives.” -Staff

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