

Broadway: A Community on the Move

Evaluation of Active Living by Design | Cleveland, Ohio | 2003-2008

A renewed sense of community is bubbling to the surface in the Slavic Village Neighborhood of Cleveland, Ohio. Reminiscent of the camaraderie of its Eastern European residents and the commercial and industrial hustle and bustle of years passed, the neighborhood is once again capitalizing on its assets: diversity, close proximity to the city, natural resources, commercial corridors and, of course, passionate residents.

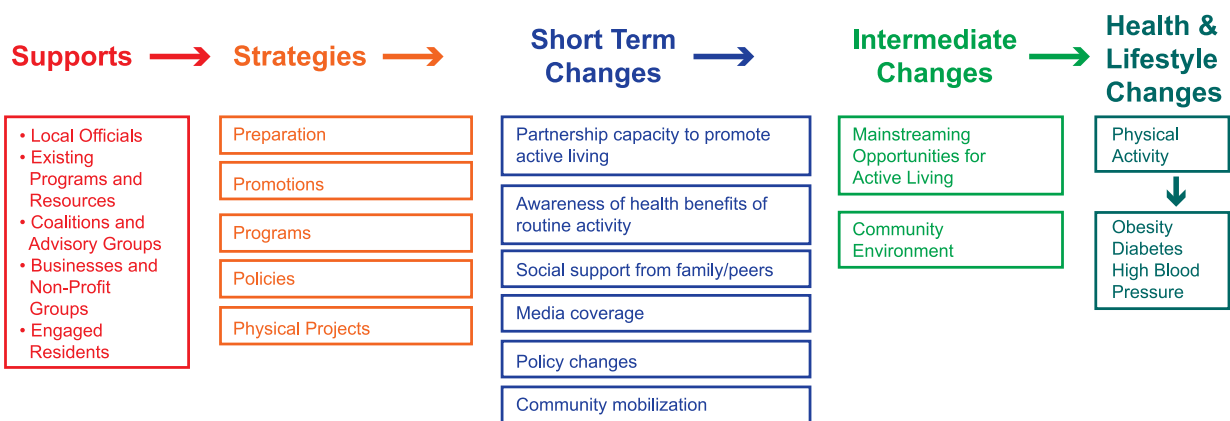
An unexpected force is driving these changing perceptions of the community – active living. “Active living” is a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines in order to accumulate at least 30 minutes of activity each day. In November 2003, the Slavic Village Development Corporation received a five-year, \$200,000 grant as part of the Active Living by Design national program (www.activelivingbydesign.org) funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). 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.¹

“I think the [Active Living by Design] grant’s helping us do that. I don’t think we’d be able to focus the amount of time and energy that we have on active living if we hadn’t had that grant... People start to see us as it’s like an active neighborhood. I heard someone say that somebody moved into our neighborhood recently because of the trail! Wow! I’m thinking that it will pay off and it just takes time to change over from what people look at as an old ethnic industrial type neighborhood. It’s really a pursued vitality and that’s really what we’re hanging our hat on—this active living type thing, because it really does energize people.” -Staff

Slavic Village Development Corporation is one of the largest community development organizations in Cleveland. The agency serves the largest geographical region and it has been in the community for more than 25 years. Many different services are provided by the agency, including community organizing, community development, property management, housing development, and business/economic development (www.slavicvillage.org).

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 Slavic Village Development Corporation to better integrate its interests in providing resources for disadvantaged members of the community and to more fully engage the community through advocacy, programmatic, and promotional efforts.

Active Living by Design Community Action Model



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

Active living has had a profound impact on the Slavic Village Development Corporation's approach to working in and with the community; it has helped to transform the agency into a quality of life organization. The agency's new philosophy is to build relationships with residents, not just as a means to an end but as a way to become personally involved with community members.

“We were a development organization. We did housing. We did commercial development. We did community organizing around issues. And now we’ve shifted ourselves into a quality of life organization. Yes, we do work on housing. We do work on commercial projects. But we really think a lot about quality of life, and we do, the active piece is our hook... The whole piece of it too is what’s our vision of the neighborhood? What kind of quality? What kind of life?” -Staff

Through the agency's leadership and strong ties in the community, the “active living hook” has re-engaged residents and businesses in efforts to restore the vitality of the community. The changes are visible in the community as new housing developments have begun to take into account sidewalks, bike lanes, trails and the proximity between residential and commercial destinations to attract people to purchase homes. Changes in Slavic Village are also having an impact in the city of Cleveland witnessed through new collaborations across sectors (e.g., housing, parks and recreation, transportation, schools) and support from local elected officials.

“The grant has transformed how we think about the neighborhood and ourselves and our world.” -Staff

Slavic Village Neighborhood

The Slavic Village Neighborhood has a history of rich diversity as Polish, German, Czechoslovakian, Irish, and Welsh immigrants lived and worked together in this commercial and industrial heart of Cleveland, Ohio. The neighborhood is located in the city of Cleveland and has approximately 444,313 residents, many of whom are economically dependent children and seniors (2000 Census). In fact, the 2000 U.S. Census reports that there were 70 children and seniors for every 100 working-age adults (www.planning.city.cleveland.oh.us/cwp/pop_trend.php). The median household income among Cleveland residents in 2000 was \$25,928. The Cleveland neighborhood of Slavic Village, home to approximately 45,000 residents, has a similar income level (median household income = \$24,822). At least 23% of the Slavic Village population lives in poverty. The population of Slavic Village is ever-changing; African Americans constitute 60% of the population, a number that has more than doubled since 2000. In addition, a large number of single-parent households are found in the Slavic Village and half of the residents rely on public transportation.

To create more opportunities for active living in the Slavic Village Neighborhood, the Broadway: A Community on the Move project combined policy influences and physical projects with promotional and programmatic efforts. These strategies build on and overlap with a significant amount of preparation work to start and maintain efforts over time; all efforts are described in the rest of this brief. Overall, the team described the benefits of working piece by piece and recognizing the impacts being made, even if it was individual by individual.

“Bite off one piece at a time ...meaning things take longer than you think they’re going to take and even though you feel like you might not be making that much of a difference, you are affecting somebody. And so don’t belittle the work that you’re doing.” -Staff

Preparation

Partnership

The multidisciplinary and collaborative approach of Active Living by Design inspired the Slavic Village Development Corporation to bring together individuals and organizations that traditionally have not worked together, and to organize and build synergy across the activities of these individuals and organizations. In 2003, the agency formed the Connecting Cleveland Communities partnership that later evolved into Broadway: A Community on the Move through its integration with similar efforts funded in this community (e.g., Steps to a Healthier Cleveland).



“The Active Living project has really galvanized a lot of different groups and organizations that previously didn’t really interact with each other, so it’s been great on a number of levels.” -Partner

Slavic Village Development Corporation engaged multiple partners by communicating with the right people or departments; approaching potential partners with confidence and enthusiasm; involving partners in planning and decision-making; and encouraging all partners to be flexible, open, and willing to compromise and stay engaged over time. Much of the success of Broadway: A Community on the Move has been attributed to the human capital from the Slavic Village Neighborhood and the greater Cleveland metropolitan area; the agency connected good people from different professions who really care about making a difference in the community.

“The partnership is somewhat of a think-tank that is continuing to make connections and brainstorm ideas that are being implemented in other parts of the city...” -Staff

The table below lists the partners involved in the Community on the Move partnership.

Members of A Community on the Move partnership	
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Western Reserve University Medical School • Department of Public Health/Steps to a Healthier Cleveland • Cleveland State University <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biomedical and Health Institute - Levine College • Kaiser Permanente • MetroHealth Clinic
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleveland Public Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AB Hart - Mound - South - Warner - Willow • St. John Nepomucene Elementary School

Members of A Community on the Move partnership (continued)

Parks & Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadway Boys and Girls Club • City of Cleveland, Chief of Park Planning and Landscape Architect • Cleveland Metroparks • Clevelanders in Motion • Friends of the Morgana Run Trail • Greater Cleveland YMCA • Morgana Little League • ParkWorks • Stella Walsh Recreation Center
Urban Design, Planning & Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Cleveland: City Planning Commission • Cuyahoga County: Planning Commission • EcoCity Cleveland • Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority • Kent State University, Urban Design Center • Neighborhood Progress, Inc. • Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency • Ohio Department of Transportation
Community Leaders, Policy- & Decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bike/pedestrian Advisory Committee to the mayor • City Council members • Mayor • Deputy Commissioner of Health
Other Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleveland Police Department, 3rd District • Northeast Ohio Sewer District
Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Century Cycles • McDonald's • Ohio City Bike Co-op • Orchard Civic Association • Third Federal Savings & Loan
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Neighborhood News
Community & Faith-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alexia Manor Senior Apartments • Broadway United Methodist Church • Cleveland Public Art • Harvard Village Senior Apartments • Jones Road Congregational Church • Morton Block Club • Parent and teen volunteers • Slavic Village Development Corporation* • Slavic Village Historical Society • Slavic Village Senior Resource Center • Sokols of Greater Cleveland • University Settlement • Village Grace Outreach Center

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

Leadership and Champions

To inspire cross-sector collaboration and a transformed philosophy of the Slavic Village Development Corporation, the agency was very fortunate to have a passionate and talented leader to be the sparkplug for getting this initiative started in the community. She had worked with some of the partners on other projects and she helped bring a range of different partners to the table. Some of the characteristics used to describe how she championed the active living effort in Slavic Village included her great personality, her connections to a lot of people in Cleveland, her persistence, her visionary approach and her capacity to move from vision to action.

“Part of the reason that the initial Active Living partnership worked so well and [that] the project pulled together so well was because of [her] – her personality, and the people that she knew, she knows, within Cleveland. She could tap on the shoulder and say, ‘Hey! This is what I’m doing! Get involved. It’s really great!’” -Staff

These accomplishments were not easy given that the Executive Director of the agency did not immediately buy-in to the initiative given the uncertain relationship of active living to community development. Reichel, therefore, worked above and beyond her usual organizational duties to start the Active Living by Design initiative. In a short time, she was able to generate positive feedback from partners and the community for the project, and, in turn, this positive feedback translated into support from the Executive Director. In large part, she attributed these successes to the opportunity to create a new brand or image for the neighborhood.

Another benefit of the Active Living by Design grant for the Slavic Village Development Corporation was the funding support to dedicate one full-time staff person to coordinate partner, staff and community activities. In addition to leadership and coordination, this position’s responsibilities included keeping in touch with people, planning monthly meetings, setting the agenda, posting project information and updates, and working with other staff and partners to fulfill the Broadway: A Community on the Move workplan goals, tactics and activities.

The leadership articulated a clear, detailed vision for changes in the community and communicated that vision through visual representations (e.g., maps, poster boards). Likewise, the agency had a reputation in the community for success in getting things done and drawing in people to help carry out their vision effectively.

“You know having a vision that can be articulated in great detail is really helpful... the walking map that – I think having just tangible pictures, whether it’s maps, renderings, all that – has kind of a galvanizing effect in that it gives people something tangible to relate to [and] understand what it is you’re trying to achieve.” -Staff

Staff

While the champion and agency leadership were instrumental in getting efforts off the ground, the staff drive and willingness to get involved, their tenacity and determination not to give up, their ability to bounce back and make adjustments as needed, their perseverance in working to build relationships with the community, and their ability to involve and keep key players in the community at the table were key ingredients in the achievements made in Slavic Village.

Staff from Slavic Village Development Corporation facilitated community organizing activities (e.g., distributing flyers and information at block club meetings or other community meetings, supporting advocacy efforts of groups such as Friends of the Trail); development activities (e.g., guidance and direction for incorporating design principles for active living into new plans); and fundraising activities related to active living projects. They also identified the project fit in the overall vision and mission of the agency for sustainability.

Having a strong staff was particularly critical during transitions in leadership, a challenge faced by the agency several times over the course of the project. The breadth of the scope of the initiative (i.e., promotions, programs, policy changes and physical projects) posed significant hurdles to the staff who had little time or experience with coordinating and running active living programs or promotional activities. Given that much of this work was new for the Slavic Village Development Corporation, the staff also had to determine ways to sustain efforts when the Active Living by Design funding was no longer available.

“And also the realization that we are not, our organization is not capable of doing programming, for widespread programming, we’re not staffed to do that, so, finding our niche in the market – finding our niche within this whole Active Living piece – and really honing that niche has been a continuing process.” -Staff

The broad scope of work was further complicated by the lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities of partners, and at times, the lack of engagement of partners over time. Staff faced many challenges in sustaining participation from partners, attracting new partners with funds and resources, working with partners who were more conservative in spending, facing transitions in partners’ staff, engaging busy elected officials and school administrators and getting partners to think and act across sectors rather than in their own spheres of influence.

“There’s decent participation. I think there’s some hesitancy by the group as to figuring what their role is as well. Since they weren’t really functioning, it was really that core group of five of us who were doing the majority of planning and work.” -Staff

At the same time, staff described several personal and professional rewards as a result of this project. They had new opportunities to collaborate with members of other agencies (e.g., Cleveland Department of Public Health’s Steps to a Healthier Cleveland staff) on related projects and activities that complemented one another. They learned new skills to help make a name for the agency in Slavic Village and the city of Cleveland (e.g., promotion, education, marketing, branding). They gained experience in grant management that served to help plan and secure additional resources. Overall, there was a renewed sense of organizational support for the health of the employees in the agency. The staff described individual or team competitions or activities for drinking water, eating fruits and vegetables, and getting more physical activity. Changes in organizational policies or practices were also adopted, such as providing time during lunch to walk, healthy options in the vending machines, and healthier foods at organizational potlucks. As a result, one of the employees was inspired to lose 150 pounds, which she has been successful keeping off.

Funding and Resources

Staff and partners reached out to a number of local, state and national funders to introduce Broadway: A Community on the Move and, ultimately, to expand the amount of financial and other resources available to support the initiative. A total of \$1,185,098 was leveraged from several different sources. Grants were received from several foundations, including the George Gund Foundation for the Kingsbury Run Greenway Study, the Cleveland Foundation for two grants to support a summer-long Youth Mapping project and a Safe Routes to School program at two pilot schools, the Hazen Foundation for youth mapping, and the Medical Mutual of Ohio Charitable Foundation for youth programming. In-kind contributions were received as well from Ohio City Bike Co-op for bicycles and for implementing an Earn-A-Bike program, Cleveland City Planning Commission for mapping activities and resources, and Cleveland Metroparks for 100 “Walking Works” kits with pedometers as incentives for walkers. The St. Luke’s Foundation provided funds for social marketing activities. Other funds, resources or investments for physical projects were provided by the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, Neighborhood Connections, City of Cleveland, Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency, Ohio Department of Transportation, First Tee of Greater Cleveland, Clean Ohio, Ohio and Erie Canal Association, and the Cleveland Municipal School District.

Cleveland is one of the recipients of funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for the Steps to a Healthier U.S. initiative. Likewise, Cleveland has a Safe Routes to School program with funding from federal, state and local funds. Because of the partnership established through the Active Living by Design initiative, these other funding initiatives have been aligned to create synergy across the projects.

The staff and partners expressed the benefit of having the Active Living by Design grant to help leverage and coordinate funds and resources with other foundations or government agencies. Although it was beneficial to receive funds and resources from multiple sources, it was also difficult to meet the varied objectives of the different funding agencies.

“Well, it was imperative that we had had the prior Active Living by Design program [to obtain the Steps to a Healthier Cleveland funding] because the Health Department was part of our, is still part of our partnership, and so, because we have that relationship with them, we were used as kind of their charter neighborhood, their charter territory, to show other groups how to promote a healthy neighborhood.” -Staff

Community Support and Challenges

The Broadway: A Community on the Move project has enabled the community to draw on its strengths and address its challenges. Over the last few decades, the Slavic Village Neighborhood residents and businesses have experienced huge social and economic changes characterized by a declining population (suburban sprawl), changing demographics (increasing older adult population, increasing African American population), fewer jobs (businesses and industries leaving and closing), abandoned homes and buildings (foreclosure and predatory lending), decreasing perceptions of safety (increasing crime, increasing traffic), increasing health disparities (higher rates of obesity), and less access to resources (rundown schools without recreational facilities, no places to walk or bike).

“A lot of families moved out, like a lot of people moved out... Jobs could be part of the reason... Or, adults stick around, most of ‘em, and the kids all move to the suburbs, out of town or whatever, [to] follow work. Just the mills are all closed, and this used to be a heavy auto industry in this area, which it isn’t, nowhere near what it used to be. And the population’s down, we were the 5th largest city in the country in the ‘50s and now we’re down to about a third of what they were then. They did walk. People used to work in the neighborhood – walk to work, walk home, walk to the park on Sundays. A lot of people had cars and never drove them but on the weekend. I don’t know if they ever did much bike riding around here... a couple people took the bus and then walked. Yeah, my kids used to ride their bikes to school, you don’t see that anymore. I think some use the bus still.” -Community Member



Despite these circumstances, the Slavic Village Neighborhood was ready for Broadway: A Community on the Move because there had already been a lot of community building efforts that had taken place. In addition, Slavic Village Development Corporation had conversations with other partners and individuals or groups in the community about green space and connecting to trails in the Cleveland area before this initiative.

“Well, I think the community here has been very forward-thinking for a large number of years. They’ve been working on a fair number of projects and I think going way back to some of [the current Project Coordinator’s] predecessors, they’ve seen the need for creating green space and creating this network. So, they are very much ahead of some of the other communities in our city. They have a connection and a budding network that will connect them to a larger trail system in the Metroparks and the Cuyahoga Valley.” -Partner

For the most part, the Slavic Village Neighborhood also has had strong citizen participation in decisions that get made in the community.

“So things do get done, and there’s a tremendous amount of interest in people and energy that surround this neighborhood. It’s kind of unique in the city in that, and the politicians all know that they don’t wanna get people stirred up here, because they do show up in great quantities and – you know – demand that things get done, and things do get done in this neighborhood.” -Community Member

Finding a niche in the community and building from the assets in the community have helped people to see Slavic Village as an active neighborhood.

“The difficulty for us when we were just starting out marketing the neighborhood has always been trying to find our niche because we’re a different kind of neighborhood... We’re Slavic Village and so, the organization is trying to bank and build on our assets which we see as the trail, the golf course, the waterfall, those connections and also some new housing. Not to say that we’re not proud of the rest of the neighborhood. It’s just that if we don’t have the niche, then let’s go off the assets that we have, and I think that’s what’s taking time.” -Staff

Although concern and opposition have been voiced by some individuals in the community during the planning stages, community residents have been very supportive of the actual changes that have taken place. For the most part, the concerns expressed from the community were about fears of the unknown regarding the types of changes that were going to occur, or that the successful changes that would occur in certain parts of the community would not be replicated in all parts of the community. The momentum started to build into excitement and enthusiasm to get things done as soon as possible.

“Yeah, but this is the exciting part... We have a lot of people that are steaming now. Where can we put these trails, how can we do that, and that’s kind of fun that way, that people are thinking about it... I think there is a lot of excitement in the neighborhood that will come out this summer of people actually wanting to get out on there.” -Community Member

Community support has also come from organizations and businesses such as the Boys and Girls Club, Stella Walsh Recreation Center, Friends of Morgana Run Trail, and a local McDonalds. Equally important to the success of the Walking School Buses and Safe Routes to School programs is the parental support. Numerous parents have and continue to volunteer their time to act as walking leaders, thus helping to ensure the safety of Slavic Village community school children. Support from elected officials, including one city council representative who is the former Executive Director of the Slavic Village Development Corporation and another city council representative who supports Safe Routes to Schools in a local elementary school, has increased the momentum of the partnership.

The following characteristics of the school district and the schools have shaped the partnership’s focus on active living in this setting:

- Bad overall reputation of this district in Cleveland
- Poor building conditions (i.e., the district stopped rebuilding and redeveloping schools because they were accused of rebuilding in a way to perpetuate racial segregation)
- Declining public school student enrollment

There were also potential opportunities for the district as they had to eliminate bussing for all students living within a 2-mile radius of the school, except for those students with physical challenges. In addition, the local Catholic high school added new recreational facilities and has continued to invest in the local community.

“I mean the district overall is losing students. Enrollment has dropped significantly. And part of that is because the district has a really bad reputation in the community – a really bad reputation.” -Staff

With respect to parks and recreation, students have used the recreational facilities and equipment from the Stella Walsh Recreation Center adjacent to South High School; however, community members were not permitted to use the school's recreational facilities. Stella Walsh is a small recreation center that has had to cut back on hours and programs due to budget cuts. The Broadway Boys and Girls Club built a new recreational facility in the Slavic Village Neighborhood that has provided great opportunities for youth in the neighborhood; yet, it has not been open to all kids from the community. Additional opportunities include the Towpath trail and Canalway park, which are beautiful, well-used resources in Cleveland located next to the Slavic Village Neighborhood.

Community engagement

- Staff and partners have helped to foster working relationships within the community and engagement of community members, including children and adolescents.
- The neighborhood block clubs have helped in planning and participating in annual events that included active living as part of the process.
- Successful promotion efforts have engaged community members in a way that enhances their knowledge, skills, or resources.
- Even though people in the community often gather in order to help solve or address problems, this project offered more of a proactive approach to engage people in their own community's interests.

“They were able to get professionals at the table to work with local folks... So it engaged kids to sit down and say ‘what would you like to see in your park?’” -Partner

“A neighborhood summit that we celebrate all the block club successes, and all the different block club leaders get to engage each other in the community, have everyone come in and see what's being done.” -Partner

“The developer brought in schools to teach some... basic skills of carpentry – ‘Hey let me show you what some of these guys do on the job’ – and these kids come in from school and it's like ‘Man I can be a carpenter, or I can do whatever, or I can build a lemonade stand or do something basic.’” –Partner

Community Assessment

During the spring of 2004, Slavic Village Development Corporation's youth organizer surveyed over 300 youth and parents at St. John Nepomucene and Mound Elementary Schools, the two pilot sites for a Safe Routes to School initiative. Crime and a high number of sexual predators residing in the area were identified by parents as reasons why they drive their children to school. Fear of crime was also present in children's responses (e.g., “I'm afraid of being snatched”) and was the most common barrier stated. In particular, a high profile crime was hard on the neighborhood. A 12 year-old girl was an abduction-murder victim found in a vacant field after a highly publicized and protracted city-wide manhunt. It was clear from this research and surveying current community attitudes that escorted “Walking School Buses” needed to be the main component of a Safe Routes to School initiative.

For the Kingsbury Run Greenway Study, a planning committee of 25 stakeholders (i.e., the Kingsbury Run Dream Team) was convened by Slavic Village Development Corporation. The first phase, a feasibility assessment of the connector trail, was completed by an engineering firm hired with Active Living by Design funds. A cost estimate was completed for trail construction and for the possible restoration of an aging and closed suspension foot bridge across the valley. This foot bridge provides a connection between an area undergoing housing and economic redevelopment and an area characterized by poverty, social isolation and poor housing conditions. Thus, reconstruction of the foot bridge is very controversial among area residents and business owners. The next phase of this study involves planning how to clean up and restore the valley, identifying amenities to include, and demonstrating how to create connections to adjacent neighborhoods.

With funding from the Federal Highway Administration, a study of the Broadway-Miles intersection was begun in June 2003 by a consulting firm hired by Slavic Village Development Corporation and the Cleveland Planning Commission. The objective of this study was to increase safety and create better pedestrian and bicyclist access in and around a very problematic intersection near an elementary school, a new park and a future trailhead.

Surveys were carried out to understand residents' current levels of physical activity, their perceived barriers to activity, desired programs, and reactions to sample messages and ads. Approximately 300 residents of all ages were surveyed by Slavic Village Development Corporation. Data from this survey was summarized and shared with the project's social marketing and advertising/graphic design consultants to inform and refine the initial ads being developed for the project's walking clubs. The survey summary was shared with the partners to inform the design of the programming activities.

Slavic Village Development Corporation created an innovative Teen Mapping project over the summer in which ten teenagers from the neighborhood were hired and trained to carry out neighborhood audits to identify the best biking and walking routes and "hot spots" or problem areas. Their data were mapped and used to design an "Active Living Map" of the neighborhood.



Policies and Physical Projects

Even though the focus of the Broadway: A Community on the Move project was to increase active living in the Slavic Village Neighborhood, much of the policy work of this project occurred at a city-wide level while the physical projects occurred in and around the neighborhood. Policies and physical projects, related partner, staff and community implementation activities and associated challenges are described below.

Grassroots advocacy efforts

- Friends of the Morgana Run Trail helped to promote awareness and respectful use of the Morgana Run Trail by local businesses and community residents.
- Friends of the Morgana Run Trail met on a monthly basis and advocated for the trail, encouraging trail safety and etiquette.

“It shows where, kind of our engagement and collaborations can get them [McDonald’s] to the table, they’re now sponsoring events in the neighborhood, they’re sponsoring our Monday night events, our Pride in the Parks kind of stuff.” -Community Member

Engaging policy-and decision-makers

- Staff and partners included all of the City Council members on their invitations and mailings.
- Two City Council members have been active in supporting promotional events and programs.
- The former Mayor of Cleveland and City Council members publicized the Walking School Bus and Safe Routes to School programs.
- In May 2005, the former Cleveland Mayor joined the Mound elementary walking school bus, walked with children to school, and announced that she wanted all Cleveland Schools to implement the Safe Routes to School program at their schools.
- Health and active living messages have been shared with decision-makers in transportation, planning, and other government agencies.

“I think the idea is starting to percolate out that we need to have walkable and bikable neighborhoods, not just for transportation, but for health... it’s been great to bring [the health perspective], even to the transportation table, it’s like when a bunch of city planners say ‘boy this would be great,’ that’s one thing, but when a person’s doctor says ‘look you need to start exercising and walking more,’ it’s like ‘whoah, that must be serious.’ So, I think it helps to have a multi-pronged approach, the more leverage you can bring the better.” -Partner

Mayor’s Bike/Pedestrian Advisory Committee and local design standards

- The Bike/Pedestrian Coordinator for the City of Cleveland, a steering committee member for Broadway: A Community on the Move, has been a member of the Mayor’s Bike/Pedestrian Advisory Committee. A subcommittee of this group was set up to establish Local Design Standards for Complete Streets which would require specific bike and pedestrian accommodations in all infrastructure projects.
- Best practice research was carried out by EcoCity Cleveland and the City Planning Commission. The first component, Bike Lane Design Guidelines, adopted from the city of Chicago, were recommended by the Bike/Pedestrian Committee and approved by the City Planning Commission.
- Several city officials went to Chicago on a site visit to see how the improvements can make a difference.
- City officials have presented the plan for bike lanes to neighborhood groups and associations and received favorable responses.
- City officials have had to work with county officials to ensure that there is connectivity to other parts of the county with respect to trails and bike lanes.
- Next steps will be to get funding and support to implement the guidelines.

“One of the ongoing projects is implementing the Complete Streets Program at the city, and we’ve used discussion here and the group that was brought together to help to advance that, we still haven’t implemented it citywide, but we do have buy in from certain [Community Development Corporations] based on what was initially started here.” -Partner

Fleet Avenue Street Design Guidelines, Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements

- Fleet Avenue was an area of concern for pedestrian and bicycle improvements among Slavic Village Neighborhood residents.
- With its potential to connect residents to areas such as Washington Park Reservation, Morgana Run Park and Trail, Stella Walsh Recreation Center, Mound Elementary School, South High School, and Broadway Avenue, pedestrian and bicycle safety had to be addressed.
- Fleet Avenue was selected as a practical model for planning and implementation of the new street design guidelines in Slavic Village Neighborhood.
- City officials and residents agreed that improvements to streetscape elements such as sidewalks, bike lanes, lighting, benches, and bike racks had the potential to both help increase active living and increase economic development.
- The Mayor allocated funding in the city budget for the design efforts.
- The respective federal, state, county and city government agencies coordinated their efforts to determine what could be accomplished within the scope of the budget.
- The success of this planning effort has inspired similar efforts throughout the local area; yet, the implementation has been difficult to get accomplished.
- The original plan for redesign of Fleet was ideal for pedestrians and bicyclists. However, once the engineers started to assess the costs and feasibility of the plans and the businesses found out about the changes to parking, the plans had to be modified fairly substantially.
- A related major safety improvement involved the addition of an I-77 overpass on Fleet Avenue with sidewalks wide enough to accommodate children and bicyclists in a safe environment.
- The Ohio Department of Transportation played a significant role in this project and it was important to get their buy-in.



“This bridge is also a victory, in that the [Ohio Department of Transportation]... wanted to lengthen the bridge, we got them to widen the bridge, they put in 10-foot wide sidewalks that allowed them to connect to the Washington Park Reservation Trail... And that’s no small achievement, especially in our district... The fact that they listened to the community, said this is a gateway bridge into the city, into this neighborhood, can you do something different? And they did almost everything we had – I don’t know what we asked for that they didn’t do! They put up wrought iron, they did the wide sidewalks, they did the faux brick. Yeah, I mean, I think they did things we didn’t even ask for, just to kind of round the project out.” -Staff

Other Transportation

- East 55th Rapid Station. East 55th Street has a mess of interstates and rail traffic, and along this heavy traffic thoroughfare is the light rail transit station. Staff and partners intend to play a role in increasing accessibility to the public transit system by participating in plans for pedestrian and bicyclist improvements to the street and intersections around the station.
- Broadway-Miles Intersection. With funding from the Federal Highway Administration, the Broadway-Miles intersection is a very problematic intersection near an elementary school, a new park, and a future trailhead. During 2004, four options to increase safety and create better pedestrian and bicyclist access at this intersection were developed and a final design was selected. The engineering work has been underway.
- Sidaway Foot Bridge. The original foot bridge was built in the 1930's connecting two neighborhoods, Kinsman Garden Valley neighborhood (north) and St. Hyacinth (south). Kinsman Garden Valley neighborhood has been traditionally African American, while St. Hyacinth is traditionally Polish. A Community on the Move project has faced considerable challenges trying to get community support to restore or even paint and add lights to the bridge.

“The Broadway-Miles intersection... it’s just absolutely deadly... This was supposed to be a freeway interchange, which is why it’s ramped, it’s uni-directional... while it’s a whole nightmare to cross as a pedestrian, it’s not deadly, as a matter of fact, it’s one of the safer ones in the city... it’s safe because it so discourages foot/bicycle traffic, nobody goes close enough to it to get into trouble... We are looking for funds to do a pedestrian bridge to solve the issue. It’s not the 100% solution, but it would get people back and forth, you know, and start to encourage more foot traffic along there.” -Staff

South High School Recreation Facilities

- Partners and staff helped to plan and develop a new recreational facility for South High School, including a football field, basketball courts, a tennis court, and other amenities.
- Partners recommended a joint-use agreement for school and community members’ use of the facilities. This has been a controversial issue. For example, the school built a fence around the new facility in order to keep the kids inside the area during any recreational programs or activities for safety purposes. This fence was criticized because community residents were concerned that the fence may discourage residents from using the facilities.
- Community members were aware of the new recreational facilities planned and under construction at South High School, and they believed that people would use the new courts and fields.

“There shouldn’t be an issue [with the joint school-community agreement for the new recreational facilities behind South High] because that’s how they were built originally and legislations’ passed and it’s in the record someplace, so it’s like educating the district... that was to save taxpayers money, to not build redundant facilities right next to each other... after thirty years of animosity, when the Active Living program kind of observed itself and said here’s an opportunity, because of their engagement with schools and their courses and the core team and then gave them a new recreation department, they were really coming in as kind of the innocent rich dog. [They] went over and met with these two different warring sides. It is kind of like a referee. And it was amazing how they were cooperating... but they were kind of like ‘we could really be embarrassed by not cooperating.’” -Partner

New development for schools

- Core teams for planning two new elementary schools, Mound and Warner, were established to provide input into the design of the new schools. Both went through the preliminary planning phases with the school architect and the Broadway: A Community on the Move project's urban planner/architect who was hired to incorporate opportunities for physical activity into the school facilities plan.
- Staff facilitated a participatory planning process that resulted in design changes from the school district's original plan that will allow separate access for cars and walkers/bikers. The site plans accommodated more play areas and a building configuration that allowed opportunities for future expansion for a community center if funds can be raised.
- The new Warner Elementary School site was located in a neighborhood that enabled children to get to school more safely (i.e., not having to cross through a dangerous intersection).
- Warner Elementary School was scheduled for construction by the fall of 2006.
- Mound Elementary School had very poor building and grounds conditions (e.g., a jungle gym as its only recreational facility, little green space) and it was difficult to find a new location for the school.
- The Mound development process was halted after the preliminary design stage because of major delays in land acquisition needed for the school.
- Eminent domain was considered and tentatively planned by the City of Cleveland and the Cleveland School District. A slum and blight study of the area was prepared by the City Building and Housing Department in preparation for this process.
- Mound School land was then acquired at a new site and demolition was scheduled for the fall of 2008, with the school scheduled to open in 2010.
- Even though staff had met regularly with the City and the School District on these and several related projects, policies for construction of new schools that mandate a certain number of recreational facilities on school property had been detrimental to efforts to build new schools in landlocked urban areas. In addition, some of the specifications for building new recreational facilities and equipment have required materials that have been too expensive for these schools.

“Ironically, the commission that evaluates the construction of new schools does have criteria for physical education facilities, which very often makes building in landlocked urban neighborhoods almost impossible. Because they have an ‘x’ number of baseball fields, an ‘x’ number of soccer fields, an ‘x’ number of playfields that need to go with every new building. But in the case of Warner school, it took a third degree calculus to figure out how we were going to jam all of that stuff and still put a school building there, and it’s a policy that was conceived for new construction on virgin land ... all the playground equipment needs the new foam rubber, whatever special equipment underneath it, which makes it next to impossible to afford for, what’s essentially a school district that is financially insolvent.” -Staff

“The original [Warner School Building] was closed in the ‘90s and the neighborhood worked really hard to get it torn down, and this has now sprung up in its place, and will be a new K-8 school. The physical importance of that building is that that intersection we came through... there was no school there, so you had to get through that intersection, and a lot of these kids are put out on the sidewalk by mom and dad in the morning and pointed towards school and say, ‘go at it’...” -Staff

“Mound is, if not the oldest, it’s the second oldest building in the district. It’s in the second poorest condition... It’s absolutely horrible... So its most recent iteration was finished in 1899, and that was a rebuild... because of site constraints, it has been continually pushed back in the phasing of the school district’s reconstruction plans.” -Staff

Physical education in schools

- The current Project Coordinator has served on a committee that worked to create the wellness policy for the school district and they have had some success in writing a policy for increased frequency and duration of physical education classes in local schools.
- The policies have not yet been implemented and the state of Ohio has no physical education or nutrition education requirements for schools.

“There is no [physical education] policy [in the schools]. Ohio has no physical education rules, policy requirements, nor do they have nutrition education policy requirements. However, currently, it is that sixth through eighth have a semester of physical education a year, and that high schoolers are only getting two semesters of physical education their entire four years. I served on the committee that worked to create the wellness policy for the school district, and we upped that, so to say that physical education four semesters for high school students, and a full year in grades sixth through eighth.” -Staff

Morgana Run Trail

- Staff collaborated with Cleveland Metroparks Department and the Ohio Department of Transportation on trail development and maintenance.
- The Morgana Run Trail was a rails-to-trails project that has transformed some of the unused industrial railroad tracks bisecting the Slavic Village community into a pedestrian and bike trail.
- This two-and-one-half mile off-road trail created a safe place for ‘active’ transportation (e.g., walking, biking) and links Mill Creek Falls park and trail to the Boys and Girls Club and to the Washington Park Reservation.
- Partners identified plans to build a connecting trail from the Morgana Run Trail to other widely used local trails (i.e., Canal Reservation, Towpath Trail).
- The preliminary engineering for the Morgana Run Trail has been completed, construction started in the summer of 2005, and the trail opened to the public in October 2006 (www.slavicvillage.org/Neighborhood/points_of_interest).
- McDonald’s worked with Morgana Run Trail developers and determined that, because of its location along the trail, pedestrians and bicyclists could benefit from the installation of bike racks, patio tables, and chairs as part of a trailhead.

Community residents described many positive responses to the Morgana Run Trail, including:

- The trail draws new residents or businesses to the area.
- It brings people out into the community.
- It generates pride, excitement, and involvement of community members.
- It increases physical activity levels of community members.
- It takes a man-made built negative structure (rail) and turns it into an asset (trail).
- It is an all-purpose trail for multiple users (e.g., pedestrians, joggers, bicyclists).
- It is safe and convenient for different users because it is in the neighborhood, flat, wide, and open.
- It helps to clean up the neighborhood.
- It increases connectivity to residences and destinations in the community (note: it is hoped that this will continue to improve over time with linkages to other trails).

Washington Park Reservation Trail

- Cleveland Metroparks developed a perimeter trail around Washington Park and Golf Course.
- The park trail and golf course paths have been used for walking clubs.
- While these trails provide a place to be active in the north end of Slavic Village Neighborhood, the connecting bridge over the highway has been a major barrier to accessing the rest of Slavic Village.
- The First Tee Golf Course at Washington Park Reservation was constructed and seeded by contractors working for First Tee of Greater Cleveland. This is the only golf course in the area and it is designed for kids (e.g., learning how to play, learning how to care for the golf course) and adults.
- During the second project year, the maintenance building and driving range shelter were constructed. The course opened in the spring of 2006.
- The plans for the golf course and trail were not well-received by local residents at the beginning, but it has been very popular since it was constructed.
- In addition, Cleveland Metroparks carried out park improvements in the Washington Park Reservation, including a soccer/football field and a new picnic shelter. These park facilities have been located adjacent to the South High School Campus Horticulture Center.



“The Washington Park, the trail, was another coup that [the original Project Coordinator] was able to pull off.. This is just a trail that kind of winds into the neighborhood, and you can follow it all the way down to the Canalway or Towpath [trail]. So, really if that... foot path had been connected, it would have opened up quite a bit. It would have opened up that whole north end of town... to a neighborhood that doesn't have access to it. However, looking at this highway bridge, you're looking at like a \$2 million project or more.” -Staff



Boys and Girls Club

- The turf for the ball fields at the Boys and Girls Club was donated by the Cleveland Indians baseball team.
- There has been some conflict about the use of the fields by the community and the schools, and this is still being negotiated.
- The Executive Director of the Boys and Girls Club has offered to adopt the parts of the Morgana Run Trail (see above) that run behind the building and expressed interest in installing lights and a gate to increase accessibility to the facility.

“The Boys and Girls Club would be willing to adopt the [Morgana Run Trail] behind the Boys and Girls Club... and this is where Mound Elementary School's gonna go. So he had expressed interests in possibly putting up lights in the back of their property – not only will it light their property, but it will also light the trail – and then also putting a gate in the back fence of their property to [increase] accessibility.” -Staff

Other Parks and Recreation

“The Mill Creek Waterfalls... the concept is – and everyone’s on board with it [and] just coming up with funding and knowing how to do it – is to take the bike trail from the waterfall there all the way down to the bike trail. That will really help tie in our neighborhood down to the trail down there and, in fact, we’ve already really started working on it - that is from the trail they’re kind of backing it up the hill, so that they’re doing the botchy part this last year.” –Community Member

“There’s another trail that goes through the edge of the neighborhood (Hyacinth). We’re also doing a public art project in the park there and wanting to get more people involved. The neighborhood association... put in a small grant and got a grant funded from neighborhood connections to do a Friends of the Park, to try and get kids out and get more people out in the community involved in being part of the park.” –Staff

- Bennet Wildlife Habitat. The Bennet Wildlife Habitat and Picnic area was constructed. Environmental cleanup of this former junkyard site as well as grading and park and trail construction was completed by the second year of funding.
- Mill Creek Park, Trail and Waterfall. This land in the Mill Creek area was formerly a brownfield (real property planned for expansion, redevelopment, or reuse that may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant). A new park and trail were constructed near the Mill Creek waterfall. Planning efforts are underway to connect the trail to the park with the waterfall.
- Hyacinth Park. Hyacinth Park has undergone some reconstruction and improvements such as a public art project.

Staff, partners, and community members identified a number of challenges to developing and implementing policy and physical project strategies:

- It was challenging to introduce something new to the community because the impact of the change was unknown.
- It took a long time and a large amount of money to make changes to the built environment (e.g., land use planning, design, engineering).
- Timelines were disrupted by months or years because of problems, such as land acquisition.
- Planning for improvements – even in small communities – was controversial because some neighborhoods in the community got resources before other neighborhoods.
- The project area had an inadequate transportation infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- The mindset of an automobile-dominated area limited policy- and decision-makers definition of transportation.
- Segregation, racism, and classism led to tremendous opposition to rebuilding or improving the built environment connecting different neighborhoods and to shared use of some recreation facilities.
- Crime and interpersonal safety fears were expressed by residents’ for walking in the Slavic Village Neighborhood and using the trails.
- There was inadequate space and facilities for recreation in local schools.
- Building trails without a trail network did not create meaningful transportation or recreation facilities.
- There were not sufficient resources to maintain and staff recreational facilities.
- Security measures (e.g., gates around recreational facilities or playgrounds) and law enforcement efforts to increase safety were sometimes uninviting or offensive to the residents.
- Lack of cleanliness, maintenance and security of the environment (e.g., garbage and litter on the trail, sidewalks in poor condition, inadequate lighting).
- It was difficult to get people to use the facilities or infrastructure created to support active living.

“But what most people really want is that connectivity. I think that [this is what] we’re trying to really talk about now as part of our neighborhood plan, ‘cause we’re undergoing a whole other planning process right now, and trying to find a way to connect our little neighborhood.” -Staff

“The traumas with Morgana Run Trail – originally, the city was going to contract for the work, and because of some ordinances we have in Cleveland about hiring, certain hiring standards, the cost was going to – anyway, it was just a mess. So, at that point then we asked the city if we could ask [Ohio Department of Transportation] to step in and be the project manager... they said ‘yes’, and I have to say I don’t think like four years ago they would have said ‘yes’, they just didn’t have a very open attitude toward non-highway projects.” -Staff

“The people down here, it was a mix of being fearful of folks of a different economic class because those are housing projects on the other end of that bridge and the people that weren’t concerned with the economic differences were concerned with the racial differences.” -Staff

“There are areas that people on the street can’t see the trail. You’re kind of isolated.” -Community

Promotions and Programs

Promotional and programmatic efforts of the Broadway: A Community on the Move project helped to support policies and physical projects by increasing overall awareness of active living and social and institutional support for individuals to get active. Promotions and programs as well as related partner, staff and community implementation activities and associated challenges are described below.

Marketing and branding skills

“Well, the whole market promotion piece... it’s completely new to us... so the money that we got from active living to put into marketing was the beginning of our education on how to do marketing.” -Staff

“We’ve been around for... almost like thirty years... there’s less of those kinds of people who don’t know who we are, and what we’re trying to do... [as a result of] forming relationships and partnerships with people.” –Staff

- Through Active Living by Design funding and technical assistance, staff learned how to do marketing and branding. It paid off well because there are now fewer people who don’t know the Slavic Village Development Corporation and what they are trying to do in the community.

Local media coverage

- The projects have received excellent local media coverage, including a televised initial grant announcement, several articles in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, an in-depth radio story on the Safety Walks program, and a feature in a regional monthly journal on healthy lifestyles.
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“We’re lucky enough to have the neighborhood news. It’s a local paper... It’s the walking journal of Broadway... I’ve used the thing so many times with puttin’ kids’ names in it... but you’d be amazed how many kids or parents take that paper to work and say ‘okay, here’s my boy.’” -Partner

Teen mapping project

- As a result of the 2004 teen mapping project (see Community Assessment), maps of Broadway/Slavic Village were published and distributed throughout the neighborhood.
- The maps include “safe” walking routes in the community; future bike trails; recreation opportunities and destinations such as local schools, libraries, shopping and businesses; and a distance key based on minutes of walking and biking.
- Maps were distributed at a neighborhood festival in August and to local businesses, recreational centers, and a nature center for their customers.
- An electronic map was also added to Slavic Village Development Corporation’s website that highlights parks and recreational opportunities within the community.



“Cause now all other areas of Cleveland want to have that map or copy that map.” -Partner

Safe Routes to School, the Walking School Bus and the Walk-to-School Toolkit

- Child pedestrian safety was successfully addressed through the development and implementation of programs such as the Walking School Bus and Safe Routes to School. Several area elementary schools, both public and private, decided to implement these programs for their students.
- During the spring of 2004, St. John Nepomucene and Mound Elementary schools were the two pilot sites for a Safe Routes to School initiative. The walking routes were planned based on mapping where each student lived. This was done by the Cleveland City Planning Commission with information provided by the schools.
- Parent volunteers were recruited and an event was held at each school for an International Walk to School Day on October 6th. St. John’s held a Walk to School parade down Fleet Avenue, which is the main east-west route through the neighborhood and Mound held a Walk to School Day with walking school buses and parent volunteer escorts.
- A grant was received to fund a parent coordinator at each school to organize walking school buses at each school for the Safe Routes to School program.
- It was very beneficial to have these programs implemented by Mound elementary school because of the strong support from the school and the surrounding community.
- The success of the Safe Routes to School and Walking School Bus programs at Mound has enabled parents and children to address their safety concerns as well as provide tools for other schools to use with their parents and students.
- It was much more difficult to get this program up and running at other schools (i.e., Willow and Sacred Heart).
- As a result of the Mayor’s announcement to have all Cleveland Schools implement the Safe Routes to School program, Slavic Village Development teamed up with the Cleveland Department of Public Health to create a Walk-to-School Toolkit to disperse to the different schools.

“I think there’s a very tight knit community around Mound Elementary School... she [the principal] was very willing to be a part of it, and be involved and very community-minded and over the last 20 years, the two or three times the school would try to close Mound, the parents didn’t even need organizing. They’d rise up and be like, ‘No you’re not closing our neighborhood school,’ and the school would say, ‘Oh let’s go some place else, where it’s easier to deal with people.’” -Staff

“Compensation has been given to parents who have served as volunteer coordinators for the Safe Routes to School program and that’s been [a] mixed bag. In one instance, it worked out wonderfully and in another instance it did not work out and in another it was mediocre.” -Staff

Trail events and programs

- Partners organized events on the Morgana Run Trail in the Slavic Village Neighborhood to increase visibility and use of the trail.
- Friends of the Trail programs and events helped gain support from local businesses for programs and events encouraging use of the Morgana Run Trail by community residents and employees working at local businesses.
- Staff and partners helped with the grand opening of the trail and had a band from the local high school marching up and down with residents.
- Friends of the Trail members have started a cycling club believing this will appeal to a different set of people who want to bicycle in the neighborhood.

“It’s gonna be a good thing for the neighborhood and a good thing for the people to be out and have an excuse to be out... Well, can we have Halloween up and down on the trail or can we do all kinds of different activities?” And I think that’s where I’m getting really excited about it, because this is something that’s unique to our city anyway... we don’t have anybody else that has this kind of a trail.” –Community Member

Organized walk and run programs and events

- Community partners have helped to organize an annual run in the Slavic Village Neighborhood.
- Staff and partners started regularly scheduled, escorted “Community Walks” with the dual purpose of promoting physical activity and counteracting community concerns related to high profile street crimes. These walks were focused in the parts of the neighborhood where senior citizens walking on the street were being mugged. The evening walks were organized two times each week to “take back the street” and counteract the sense of intimidation and retreat that people felt.
- The organization of walking groups, led by volunteer community members, has enabled residents to view their environment as a safer place, and in essence take back community ownership and pride. There was very good participation in the Safety Walks program.
- In October, the number of walks was expanded for “Walktober in Cleveland,” a city-wide promotion of national walking month. Over a dozen special walks were held that month, including “sneak peak tours” of two new park/trail facilities underway and “history hikes” with members of the Slavic Village Historical Society.

“It’s a 5K. I wanted to take them onto Fleet [Street]. And we pretty much did it, and we did it half walking and driving - that we’re very close to the 5K. We might have to add an extra little something there to get it to be the 5K, but I thought it would just be great to have people come down Fleet.” –Staff

Mini grants for youth and senior programs

- Mini grants were given to local community organizations (e.g., athletic programs at the Boys and Girls Club, athletic programs at the Stella Walsh Recreation Center, Clevelanders in Motion by the Slavic Village Senior Resource Center, Healthy Kids by local faith-based organizations) conducting youth physical activity programming or senior physical activity programming.
- Slavic Village Development Corporation received money from the Medical Mutual Foundation of Ohio to fund youth physical activity programming and supplemented this funding with Active Living by Design funds to help with senior physical activity programming.
- Staff and partners have continued to set aside funds for youth and senior programming given their success at the outset. Most recently, these funds have been reduced from \$2,000 to \$300 as this has seemed to be a more manageable amount for the community-based organizations to run program by program.
- This partnership has worked very well because the Slavic Village Development Corporation does not have the staff or resources to conduct the programming effectively.

“The mini-grants were just a huge help to the community because you could take small organizations, which was my case, and have enough money to pay teenagers or whomever to help run the program... we have over a hundred and twenty-five children in the program now, and it started with one tiny church but we now have six churches involved.” -Partner

“There’s a group like Jones Road Congregational Church who does this literacy through the arts and sports [program], and they may need extra money to get more tennis rackets, or maybe it’s a block club who has a vacant lot in their neighborhood and they want to create a community garden and so they’re going to get people out and gardening, but they need money for a tiller or seeds or whatever... smaller grant[s] to help people [in these ways are important].” -Staff

Earn-A-Bike Program

- At the beginning of the project, the youth participated in an Earn-A-Bike Program provided by Ohio City Bike Co-op. This program included 10 hours of bike safety and bike repair training. In addition to being paid for their work, each participant received a bike and helmet from the Bike Co-op.

Worksite Wellness

- Slavic Village Development Corporation initiated a pilot Worksite Wellness program involving 28 of its 30 staff members for 10 weeks over the summer as a way to gain firsthand experience with worksite wellness promotion and programming.
- The City Health Department provided technical assistance and materials.
- The American Cancer Society model was utilized with three “teams” that formed to provide motivation, encouragement, and accountability.
- Interventions included glucose and cholesterol screenings, nutrition education, daily lunchtime walks led by staff volunteers, and incentives for reaching goals.
- This summer program had the unexpected added benefit of enhancing communication between staff who don’t usually work together (e.g., property management staff and community organizing staff) and increasing staff morale.
- This experience informed Slavic Village Development’s work in the second project year to recruit industrial businesses adjacent to new trails for worksite wellness initiatives, lunchtime walking clubs, and related activities.

Challenges and Successes

Several related challenges were identified by staff, partners, and the community, including:

- It was difficult to identify the promotional niche given the segregation between areas, with predominantly white residents versus areas with predominantly African American residents.
- Similar promotional messages for related efforts (e.g., Steps to a Healthier Cleveland) need to be coordinated rather than competitive.
- Negative media messages often received much more air time and attention than positive media messages.
- Slavic Village Development Corporation staff did not have the time to run the programs.
- Most of the program participants were white, and it was challenging to recruit the African American community to participate.
- Many of the children, families, and older adults had limited financial and transportation resources so the programs had to be convenient, local, and very low cost.
- Without the trails, there are limited places to be physically active in the community other than the street (e.g., faith-based organizations have had to use classrooms as a gym in order to provide space).
- Other community programs competed for the use of facilities (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous).
- Building relationships with individual schools was very challenging and changes in school administrators could strengthen or deteriorate program efforts.
- Community fatigue set-in when programs received little to no response or participation.
- A perceived lack of safety limited participation in programs located in different parts of Slavic Village Neighborhood, particularly among older adults.
- A lack of commitment and leadership from parents had a strong negative impact on programs in the schools (e.g., Walking School Bus, Safe Routes to School).
- Parents' work or other demands on their time restricted their ability to be engaged in programs.
- Poor health status or disabilities restricted community members' ability to participate in the programs.
- Kids often do not participate consistently due to transient lifestyles, parents' schedules, and other commitments.
- It was difficult to get kids involved when they are young.

“We’re now on a new initiative. This is the best yet. The name of it is ‘Dump the Plump’... A typical day would be out of five workdays, five days there would be some kind of sweet in the office in the morning, donuts, cake, pies... gradually, it got to be like bananas, apples; people started actually being much more cognizant because you also can’t talk about promoting an active living neighborhood and sitting there eating your cookies. [Next,] healthy snacks in the machines... then we got rid of that machine altogether.” -Staff

“The difficulty for us when we were just starting out marketing the neighborhood has always been trying to find our niche because we’re a different kind of neighborhood... We wanted a certain demographic which was either all white or all black and so we didn’t really know how to come into a diverse neighborhood and so we were trying to get the message about what we wanted to attract, [because] we sat and said [that] we’re not...and we are Slavic Village.” -Staff

“Part of the work with Steps [to a Healthier Cleveland] has really been trying to figure out ‘Okay, how do we coordinate messages?’ so the messages that we’re giving our neighborhood don’t compete with the messages you’re giving the entire city of Cleveland.” -Staff

“It’s the negatives unfortunately that get the headlines... what we should be doing is taking the positive, especially with kids... so many good kids... don’t make the paper because they didn’t pull a gun or shoot somebody. They may be going to Case Western Reserve from South High... going to be an engineer... and fortunately what we have to do is put more positive things forward.” -Partner

“One of the problems that we have is, a lot of kids don’t have money for bikes and – that sort of thing, and I think that at some point in time we’re going to make more of an effort to get things for kids. We might not be able to get them bikes, but we can get them helmets, lights, and things of that nature.” -Community

“Certainly one of the problems is – it’s pretty poor around here, and so if you’re going to have activities, you have to have them really local.” -Community Member

“I think another problem we have is the parents are very busy, and they have other things that occupy them, so you have to make it very convenient for... the kids to be involved in the activities.” -Community

“Systematically, one of the barriers was just how the schools are run in a way. In North America, both the school districts and schools [operate] at those different levels. And the time it takes to get into schools and develop those relationships while knowing that at the same time, the district can say, ‘Make a change in policy the next day or that same day or [in] staff,’ that completely change the nature of the relationship...” -Staff

Sustainability

In 2008, Cleveland was awarded a sustainability grant to continue the work that they have been engaged in for the last five years and to find ways to institutionalize and support their efforts in the future. Staff, partners, and community members identified some ideas and suggestions for this ongoing work, including:

- Providing opportunities for ongoing dialogue with experts and other communities to discuss ways to sustain project efforts.
- Creating new partnerships, building on existing partnerships, and expanding the vision or niche as part of planning with all partners.
- Connecting the trails in Slavic Village Neighborhood to other trails leading to downtown Cleveland or other destinations.
- Encourage Cleveland schools to adopt Safe Routes to School programs.
- Increasing the aesthetics and amenities in and around the trails in the community by working with local youth, artists, or art departments.

“You’re asking about embracing it – the money is gonna run out, the money from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and whether we are able to find more or not – we’re not gonna change how we do business at this point. We’re gonna continue to build on the partnerships and continue creating the vision - that part of the planning process we’re going through now is making those connections and building those relationships – and just keep moving forward. If somebody had suggested to me, ‘Oh yeah, we should do mini grants, \$500,000 bucks,’ we would have said, ‘Are you nuts?’ But it turned out not to work – maybe – the way we thought it was in every case, but it turned out to be really a brilliant strategy for bringing a whole range of partners that we wouldn’t have otherwise.” -Staff

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