

STRATEGY 16	Community Master Plan & “Complete Streets”
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“Snapshot”				
Description:				
The goal is to have a school administrator and other school representatives as active members of the community’s bike and pedestrian committee or planning advisory group to ensure that active transportation is part of a master plan for development in the community.				
Resources Needed:				
Funding	Staff Time	Prep Time/Materials	Training	
None for staff or personal involvement.	Attendance at meetings. Committee members will have a greater time commitment.	Some background reading.	None required. Interest and knowledge of community planning is helpful.	
Facilities and Equipment Needed:				
Facilities	Equipment	Set up / take down time	Transportation	Custodial
None	None	None	None	None
Evaluation:				
Inclusion of physical activity options is neighborhood and community development. A Complete Streets ordinance is an example.				

Description and Rationale:

Neighborhood design affects physical activity and can play a significant role in people being physically active. One way to ensure children get enough activity is to develop neighborhoods where it is easy to walk and bike.

Many studies have now shown a correlation between neighborhood development and physical activity. An example of this is a study that looked at measures of land-use mix, residential density, and intersection density, and showed a positive relationship with the number of minutes of moderate physical activity per day. The neighborhoods that scored higher on a “walkability” index were the most active. Thirty-seven percent of individuals in the highest walkability index quartile met the adult recommendation to be physically active >30 minutes per day, compared to only 18% of individuals in the lowest walkability quartile.

Here are the definitions of a Community Master Plan, Complete Streets, and Active Transportation as background for this strategy:

Community Master Plan is a document that describes, in narrative and with maps, an overall development concept. The *master plan* is used to coordinate the preparation of more detailed plans or may be a collection of detailed plans.

Complete Streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities must be able to safely move along and across a complete street.

Active Transportation refers to the transport of person(s) by walking, biking, or other means using human muscle power for trips.

Having a Community Master Plan that includes Complete Streets guidelines or regulations will make for more active neighborhoods. What does an active neighborhood look like? Here are some key characteristics:

- Mixed-use development brings housing, commercial, retail, civic, and office development into closer proximity, placing more destinations, such as restaurants and retail stores, within reach of a short walk, bike ride, or transit trip.
- Residential density means more efficient use of land and brings destinations closer together.
- Walking/cycling facilities such as sidewalks and pedestrian/bike trails increase alternative means of transportation. Street connectivity is key for increasing short trips by foot or bike.
- Interconnected and traffic-calmed streets ensure safe, convenient pedestrian and bicycle circulation without impeding vehicle circulation.
- Good aesthetics with pedestrian-scale design balances automobile circulation and focuses on making environments that are comfortable, pleasant, and pedestrian-oriented.
- Recreational opportunities including parks, recreational facilities, and green space.
- Transit-oriented and transit-adjacent development places higher density development within close proximity to transit stops.
- Safety from violent crime is vital in promoting outdoor activities in the neighborhood.

A community master plan for complete streets will help students meet NASPE Standard 3: Participates regularly in physical activity; Standard 4: Achieves and maintains a health enhancing level of physical fitness; Standard 6: Values physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and/or social interaction.

Action Steps:

To do a quick assessment of your neighborhood, use the tool below:

http://prc.slu.edu/Documents/Active_Neighborhood_Checklist.pdf

There are a number of ways that parents, school staff, and community partners can be involved in community planning to make sure neighborhoods have active transportation and recreational options available. Here are some options on where and how to get involved:

1. Being involved with a municipalities master development plan will help when it is time to make decisions on neighborhood features. Where in the community new development takes place and whether that development has sidewalks, trails, parks and recreational facilities are all factors that are part of a master plan. By creating a good master plan that requires the features above, you can ensure that any future development will meet the development requirements.
2. Park and recreation boards provide opportunities to influence the provision of park space and recreational programming within a community.
3. If membership on the local planning groups is not an option, providing organized input to a board is an alternative that can be a critical step in creating a plan that includes physical activity opportunities.

Along with actively participating on key policy groups, there are a number of strategies that will increase your chance of successfully creating physical activity policy. Here are some factors to consider:

1. Get involved with existing local coalitions that you can partner with to advance your efforts. If there is no local coalition, gather key partners and start your own. Make your coalition as diverse as possible without compromising the focus of what you want to achieve. Although your priorities may change over time, a diverse coalition can help sustain ongoing efforts.
2. Coalitions benefit from the support of a respected champion. Having a high visibility local person leading your efforts will increase the likelihood of success.
3. Successful policy and environmental change efforts require time to create, including feedback from residents that will help support or oppose your efforts. Make sure you build a constituency to support the policies you want implemented.
4. Efforts to change or create policy will include advocacy, relationship building with policy makers, presentations to policy boards, and influencing employer or school policies. Educating policy makers - as well as citizens, professionals, and advocates - about the need for local environments that support active living is an essential component of this strategy.
5. Changing rules or policies can be time consuming, but the payoff is very high and worth the effort.

For people unfamiliar with working on policy initiatives, keep in mind that an overarching policy for neighborhood development that includes physical activity is a way to reach a large percent of the population. Although it may seem less tangible than participating in a one-day event like a local run, it actually has a much greater impact on both the number of people and the duration of the impact. Once in place, a key policy has long-term sustainability and does not require a large ongoing commitment of time to keep it in place.

Examples:

Active Living Principles – A list of key principles to guide master plan efforts to increase active living opportunities.

<http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/sites/default/files/ActiveLivingPrinciples.doc>

Active Living and City Planning: Why Schools, Public Health, Local Officials & Other Healthy Living Advocates Should Get to Know Their MPO - An issue brief on how to work with Municipal Planning Organizations to incorporate opportunities for alternative means of transportation in city planning. http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/physicalactivity/pdf_files/mpo.pdf

Resources:

Complete Streets model legislative language - National suggestions:

<http://www.completestreets.org/changing-policy/model-policy/model-state-legislation-options/>

Current Wisconsin law, Wis. Stat. sec. 84.01 (35)

(a) In this subsection:

1. “Bikeway” has the meaning given in s. 84.60 (1) (a).
2. “Pedestrian way” has the meaning given in s. 346.02 (8) (a).

(b) Except as provided in par. (c), and notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter or ch. 82, 83, or 85, the department of transportation shall ensure that bikeways and pedestrian ways are established in all new highway construction and reconstruction projects funded in whole or in part from state funds or federal funds appropriated under s. 20.395 or 20.866.

- (c) The department shall promulgate rules identifying exceptions to the requirement under par. (b), but these rules may provide for an exception only if any of the following apply:
1. Bicyclists or pedestrians are prohibited by law from using the highway that is the subject of the project.
 2. The cost of establishing bikeways or pedestrian ways would be excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use of the bikeways or pedestrian ways. For purposes of this subdivision, cost is excessively disproportionate if it exceeds 20 percent of the total project cost. The rules may not allow an exception under this subdivision to be applied unless the secretary of transportation, or a designee of the secretary who has knowledge of the purpose and value of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, reviews the applicability of the exception under this subdivision to the particular project at issue.
 3. Establishing bikeways or pedestrian ways would have excessive negative impacts in a constrained environment.
 4. There is an absence of need for the bikeways or pedestrian ways, as indicated by sparsity of population, traffic volume, or other factors.
 5. The community where pedestrian ways are to be located refuses to accept an agreement to maintain them.

National Complete Streets Coalition <http://www.completestreets.org/>

STRATEGY 17	School Site and Sidewalks and Trails to School
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“Snapshot”				
Description:				
The goal is to have a school located in a community so that it is conducive to traveling by bike or foot and if this cannot be accomplished, then actions are taken or eliminate barriers for students to bike and/or walk to school.				
Resources Needed:				
Funding	Staff Time	Prep Time/Materials	Training	
Locating new schools more centrally is generally much more costly than in outlying areas. Development of sidewalks, trails, and overpasses is costly.	Attendance at meetings. Committee members will have a greater time commitment.	Some background reading.	Knowledge of community planning, zoning and transportation laws is helpful.	
Facilities and Equipment Needed:				
Facilities	Equipment	Set up / take down time	Transportation	Custodial
None	None	None	None	None
Evaluation:				
School location decisions support walking and biking. A high percentage of children walk or bike to school or use the school recreational facilities outside of school hours.				

Description and Rationale:

Schools which are easy to walk and bike to can help promote physical activity. The school may be located close to residential areas. It may be easy for children to walk and bike to school. Local or neighborhood walking and biking maps can assist children and parents in finding safer routes to school.

Changes in school size and location have affected children’s ability to walk or bicycle to school. Over the past several decades schools have been moving out to the edges of towns where land is less expensive and more available. School consolidation and more distant school locations tend to go hand in hand - bigger schools require more land. Additionally, minimum school acreage policies may also require schools to acquire larger tracts of land. In 1969 about 45 percent of students lived less than a mile from school. By 2001 only 25 percent of students did. In 2001, students aged 6-12 lived an average of 3.6 miles from school.

Distance to school can have a significant impact on how children travel to school. In 2001, 80 percent of children living less than a quarter mile from school walked or bicycled to school. Just under half of students living between a quarter mile and a mile from school traveled to school by foot or bicycle. Parents cite distance as one of the primary barriers to walking and bicycling to school.

In addition to creating more conducive conditions for walking and biking to school, smaller neighborhood schools have other documented benefits for students and the community. Neighborhood schools encourage civic engagement and help strengthen sense of place in communities. Students at these schools perform better academically and have higher graduation rates.¹

School districts have a lot to consider when deciding on whether to build new schools and where to locate those schools. Rising (or falling) populations and development of new neighborhoods in a community are a factor, as is available land and costs to build new schools or renovate existing ones. One of the considerations in making the decision should be how students will transport themselves or be transported to the school location. A variety of standpoints (safety, physical activity, environment and air quality, and costs) all need to be considered when deciding on school placement. These factors need to be considered for both an initial and a long term perspective, since initial costs to buy land outside of town might be lower, but then transportation costs and infrastructure costs to support that site might be more in the long term.

Appropriate school sites, sidewalks and trails conducive to physical activity help students meet NASPE Standard 3: Participates regularly in physical activity; Standard 4: Achieves and maintains a health enhancing level of physical fitness; Standard 6: Values physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and/or social interaction.

Action Steps:

There are several ways that parents, school staff, and community partners can be involved in making the decision on whether to remodel or construct a new school and, if a new school is to be built, where that school is located.

1. Being involved with a municipalities master development plan will help when it comes time to make decisions on school buildings. If development happens in isolated areas outside of town, it will be more difficult to provide active transportation (walking and biking) as an option to get to school.
2. Membership on the local school board or providing input to the board is a critical step in school location.
3. A school wellness committee or school transportation committee will likely have input on school location. Become involved with these committees where they exist or help form such a committee if there is not one currently.
4. Once the school location is set, staff and community members can work with local authorities to enforce traffic laws, mark pedestrian crossing and bike lanes, and other strategies identified in the Safe Routes to School resources.

Examples:

Build a new school in the existing community

There are many school districts for which renovating or expanding an existing facility is simply not a viable option – perhaps the student population is growing very rapidly, or the cost of renovation far exceeds the cost of a new school. But this does not have to result in a sprawl school. In Manitowoc, Wisconsin, the school board had land available on the edge of town, but followed community wishes to build a new school in town on the site of a much beloved but outdated elementary school. The new

¹ *Why Walk or Bike to School Talking Points*, walktoschool.org (Accessed: 2009)

Jefferson Elementary School uses classic architecture and incorporates murals and a fireplace saved from the old school while providing state-of-the-art facilities. The community has developed a tremendous sense of ownership and pride in the school and in their neighborhood.

www.smartgrowthamerica.org/sgschools.ppt

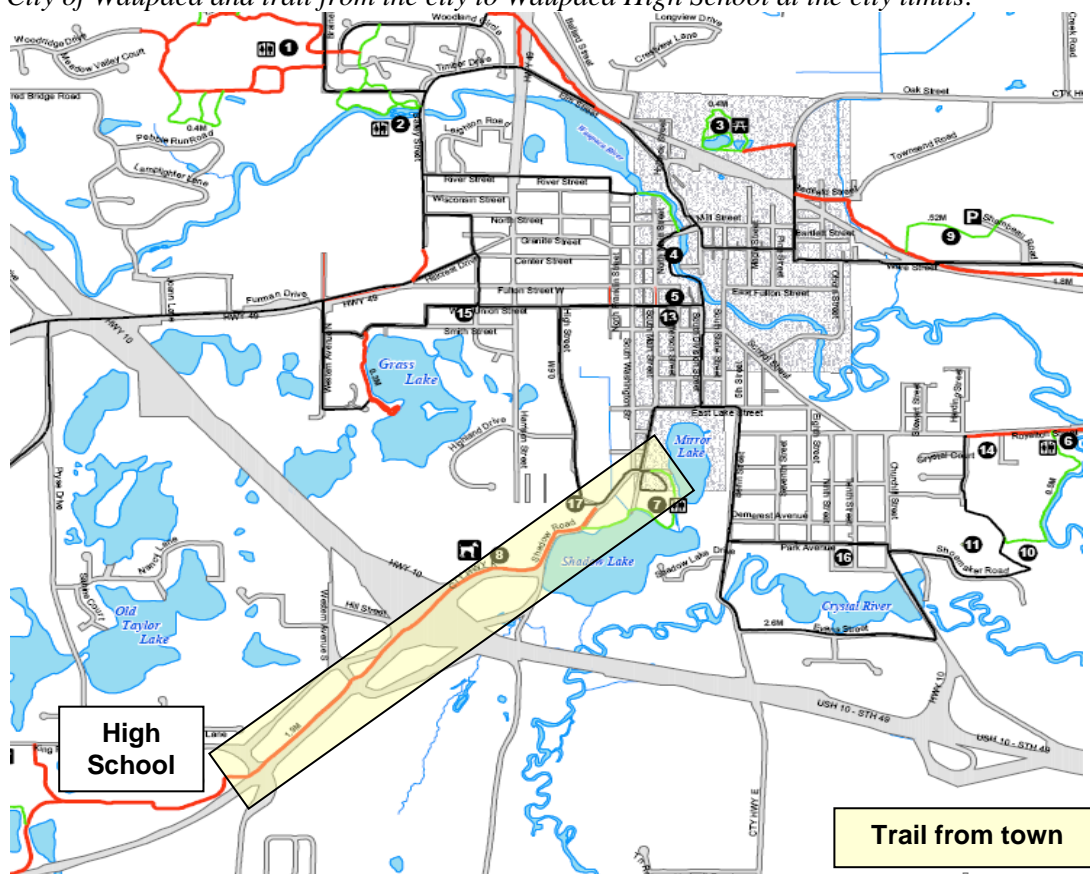
Build a new school on the outskirts of town, but provide active transportation options. Although renovating or building a school site in town is best for walking and biking, locating a school site on the outskirts of town with safe routes available for students is a second option when space does not allow for an in town building. The City of Waupaca selected that option for their new high school. A description and map of the project can be found below.

Waupaca High School Trail 2 mi.

This is a paved path that parallels Shadow Road to the high school and then connects to the WAU-KING Trail and to Hwy QQ and King. The trail allows safe walking and biking to the high school and a mile long wood chipped nature trail.

That trail also ties into the River Ridge Trail and is part of a plan to preserve urban natural areas or “greenspace” in a non-motorized trail system that winds throughout the Waupaca area. The first trail segment, a scenic loop of 1.6 miles, opened in fall of 1996. Since then, over 22 miles of trails have been designated. Bikes are allowed only on limestone or blacktopped surfaces.

City of Waupaca and trail from the city to Waupaca High School at the city limits:



Resources:

Why walk or Bike to School Talking Points <http://www.walktoschool.org/downloads/WTS-talking-points-2009.pdf>

State of Oregon school siting handbook
<http://www.oregon.gov/LCD/TGM/docs/schoolsitinghandbook.pdf>

Pennsylvania resource on renovating versus replacing schools
<http://www.saveourlandsaveourtowns.org/neighborhoodschools.html>

Smart Growth America and Smart Growth Schools presentation [www.smartgrowthamerica.org
www.smartgrowthamerica.org/sgschools.ppt](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/www.smartgrowthamerica.org/sgschools.ppt)

See also Safe Routes to School resources.