

# Live Healthy Red Wing: Creating Active Living Environments for All

## *A Summary of Live Healthy Red Wing's Work Through the Active Living for All Initiative*

In 2013, Live Healthy Red Wing (LHRW) was one of nine projects selected by the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (the Center) to receive funding through the Active Living for All (ALfA) initiative. All ALfA-funded organizations aimed to increase opportunities for physical activity in their community through policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes. With ALfA funding, LHRW worked on a number of efforts to make the city's parks, schools, businesses, and trails connected and more accessible for all residents and visitors. These efforts align with the city's existing Complete Streets policy and Safe Routes to School efforts to improve infrastructure and use programs and promotions to encourage walking and biking. As part of the ALfA initiative, LHRW formed a Mayor's Task Force on Streets and Sidewalks for a Healthy Red Wing; informed city policy changes to reflect community input, consider bike and pedestrian traffic, and include explicit language on health equity; created multiple walking and biking maps; and formed partnerships with other local organizations. This summary describes LHRW's work under ALfA from 2013-2018, including their key accomplishments, factors that contributed to their success, project challenges, and plans for the future.

## Key accomplishments

Over the course of the ALfA initiative, LHRW worked to lay a foundation so all residents have the opportunity to be healthy. Their efforts contributed to changes in city policies that support active living, and improvements in city planning and data gathering practices to identify and address inequities. LHRW also worked closely with the Latino community in Red Wing by developing relationships with Latino Outreach, supporting community leaders, fostering engagement to inform city planning efforts, and elevating community priorities. The following are some of the key accomplishments for LHRW.

**Creating and facilitating the Mayor's Task Force on Streets and Sidewalks for a Healthy Red Wing.** One lasting systems change that LHRW focused on from 2014 -2015 was the creation of the Mayor's Task Force on Streets and Sidewalks for a Healthy Red Wing. This group was made up of elected officials, community leaders, and representatives from groups most likely to be impacted by the proposed changes. Examples of changes include updating sidewalk policy and guidelines, creating a sidewalk repair plan, and conducting a full physical assessment of the sidewalks as part of the 2016 City of Red Wing Pedestrian Plan and Policy report. In addition to the Task Force, a Community Advisory Committee was formed to gather input from individuals who had a wide variety of perspectives related to bicycle and pedestrian policy. The Mayor's Task Force was able to outline and gain approval for policies and ordinances to improve sidewalks and streets in Red Wing for all. For example, the Task Force outlined a sidewalk ordinance recommendation that requires property owners to build sidewalks in gaps along vacant lots. Additionally, the Task Force wrote and gained approval for a winter sidewalk maintenance policy that prioritizes routes used by school children, older adults, people with physical challenges, and low-income neighborhoods. LHRW also used a new GIS mapping system to document the current conditions of all the city's sidewalks (including ADA requirements) and their relationships to important areas such as school walk zones. This system will help prioritize which sidewalks require maintenance and which streets without sidewalks need more data for future projects. This systems change provided opportunities for multiple community members to give input on changes related to streets and sidewalks, ensure those changes served all people, and implement policies and environmental changes that protect vulnerable people.

**Establishing the Latino Leadership Project in partnership with Hispanic Outreach and Hispanic Advocacy Community Empowerment through Research (HACER).** In 2015, LHRW, Hispanic Outreach, the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), and HACER formed the Latino Leadership Group with approximately 10 residents. The group planned and hosted a Latino leadership training and administered a survey to better understand the perspectives, priorities, and expectations of Latino residents about a variety of topics, including public safety, transportation, housing, education, physical health, and neighborhood cohesion. Results from the survey informed the three priority areas of the Latino Leadership Project: increasing wellness through healthy eating and physical activity, welcomeness, and developing a city ID program. The city ID program is currently on hold due to lack of capacity within the Latino Leadership Project, but it remains a priority. The partnership with Hispanic Outreach and HACER brought expertise and experience for appropriate and meaningful engagement with Red Wing's Hispanic community. It also led to the development and inclusion of leaders, and centering priorities based on the experiences and perspectives of Hispanic residents.

**Advocating for consideration of health impacts and increasing community engagement in planning processes.** Over the course of the ALfA initiative, LHRW influenced a number of planning processes and implemented changes to planning practices. These included:

- **Red Wing Racial Equity Plan.** As a member of the Government Alliance of Race and Equity (GARE), LHRW created a local racial equity team. This core team created a Racial Equity Plan that included strategies for making PSE changes with an emphasis on what the City of Red Wing staff, City Council, and City Commissions can do in the Red Wing community. The plan was approved by the City Council on May 8, 2017.
- **Added new criteria into city processes and plans.** LHRW added a criteria tool to the Engineer's Report, a document that is used when the city is taking on construction projects, to ensure bicyclist and pedestrian data are taken into account. They also established new criteria that informed their sidewalk improvement program and city-mapping tool.
- **Policy changes in school breakfast programs.** LHRW worked to implement two policy changes within the Hunger Free Kids Network. The resulting pilot projects were a kindergarten breakfast program and a change in the length of passing time Red Wing high school students have in the morning to allow them to eat breakfast. Both became permanent changes.
- **Policy recommendation for street and sidewalk policies and projects.** In order to deepen the Complete Streets Resolution, LHRW outlined a policy for city staff that provides a criteria sheet and community engagement process.
- **City's Strategic Plan.** As part of this LHRW's work, and the city's participation in GARE, city staff became familiar with the concept of "health in all policies." As a result, the introduction in the City of Red Wing's Strategic Plan includes Red Wing's definition of health and proposes changes that support the health and well-being of residents.
- **Community Engagement Specialist position.** As a result of LHRW's close working relationship with the City of Red Wing, the city created a community engagement specialist position to further support LHRW's work. LHRW's project coordinator was hired into this position, and a new coordinator was hired to continue and further advance LHRW's work.
- **Red Wing 2040 Community Plan (RW2040).** LHRW helped create a "health in all policies" framework that was adopted into all focus areas of the RW2040 Community Plan. As part of this work, LHRW created the RW2040 station, a method of engagement with special attention paid to underserved communities. The plan is scheduled to be finalized in January 2019.

- **City of Red Wing Scorecard.** As part of the RW2040 Community Plan, a scorecard was created to track process and opportunities for a healthier, thriving community. The scorecard includes 10 topic areas such as demographics, economy, education, housing, transportation, and health that describe life in Red Wing.

In addition to this work, LHRW conducted a number of other activities:

- **Demonstration projects.** LHRW worked with the City of Red Wing on a parklet and bump-out demonstration project for Jordan Court, an underutilized area that provides a key connection to downtown for older adults, and individuals with physical and mental disabilities. In addition, LHRW worked with the city to implement a demonstration project on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street that included a bike lane and bump-out to supporting walking and biking in the area.
- **Walking and biking campaigns.** LHRW produced multiple neighborhood walking maps as part of their Open Your Front Door engagement campaign. These maps were designed to show residents where they could be active for free in their community. Neighborhood walks were held to demonstrate the use of the maps.
- **Wayfinding signs.** LHRW installed multiple pedestrian wayfinding signs. Additionally, LHRW developed a design for pedestrian bike walk signs.

## Factors that contributed to success

**Seeking out resources and partnerships.** LHRW was able to utilize multiple partnerships in their work. Project staff and stakeholders acknowledged the importance of Red Wing's membership in the Government Alliance for Racial Equity (GARE) in informing their health equity-focused active living work. LHRW joined GARE in February of 2016. In addition to GARE, the close partnership with the City of Red Wing led to more opportunities for revising city policies using a "health in all policies" framework, with special consideration for underserved communities. LHRW staff also mentioned the importance of partnering with organizations that had deep relationships and expertise working with underserved communities. This was particularly evident in their work with the Hispanic Outreach Committee and HACER. These two organizations led the establishment of the Latino Leadership Group, the Latino Leadership Project, and the development of an ongoing health assessment component to continue learning about health, opinions and feelings about welcomeness in the community, and preferences for active living activities of Hispanic residents in Red Wing.

**Ensuring sustainability and relevance of the work through partnerships and policies.** The full-time coordinator and half-time communications assistant at LHRW created multiple strategic partnerships to grow and enhance their work. LHRW

functioned as a collaborative of multiple organizations with core staff members. The collaborative allowed for the work to be organized and divided among the members. A core racial equity team was formed as part of LHRW's work with GARE and eventually expanded into an Equity Leadership Team. The Leadership team included members of city administration, human services, planning, communication, and others. The drafting and approval of the Red Wing Racial Equity Plan, as well as the incorporation of a "health in all policies" framework in the RW2040 Community Plan, created sustainable change within the City of Red Wing's administration. In addition, LHRW created baseline definitions for health and equity that are specific to the Red Wing community and are used in guidance statements and recommendations for planning efforts. A major systems change was the creation of a Community Engagement Specialist position at the City of Red Wing. This position ensures that the work LHRW started will continue after ALfA funding concludes.

**Using tailored engagement strategies.** During the initiative, LHRW made use of various engagement strategies. The project staff created and implemented a campaign called Open Your Front Door that offered free biking and walking to encourage use of trails and walking paths. Multiple walks were held to highlight the new maps. Other strategies included sponsoring and participating in community events. For example, the group working on the RW2040 Community Plan participated in a soccer tournament hosted by the Latino Leadership Project's Increasing Wellness Leaders. As part of their participation, staff asked participants to place post-it notes with descriptions of improvements they would like to see on maps of A.P. Anderson Park and on a citywide park map. These results, along with survey results about park improvements, were included in the overall 2040 outreach and community engagement efforts. Another example of a successful community engagement strategy was pop-up demonstrations of the concepts outlined in the RW2040 Community Plan.

## Challenges and lessons learned

**LHRW worked to clarify its organizational identity and mission, especially as its work evolved over the course of the initiative.** LHRW has needed to address the public misperception that the organization is an extension of city government, rather than an independent, community-based organization. Public perception can impact trust and the degree to which residents feel their input will lead to changes in city plans and policies.

LHRW also described experiencing "mission drift." Founded to focus on physical activity and nutrition, the incorporation of "health in all policy" and health equity expanded their definitions of health and prompted the staff to think about factors such as poverty that make it harder to engage in health behaviors. This presented challenges, as some residents who have volunteered with the organization were less interested in the policy-change

work. At the same time, the strong partnership with city staff, while welcomed, often made it difficult to stay focused on “health in all policy” work because the partnership created more work that was not always about “health in all policies.” Ultimately, LHRW concluded that the focus of their work was health equity-centered active living.

**LHRW worked to balance differing timelines required for community engagement and public planning processes.** At one point in the initiative, LHRW had difficulties keeping the community engagement timelines on track. They needed to work in partnership with other organizations to help ensure community input could inform plans being developed by the city, while recognizing that time is needed to earn the trust of residents. LHRW was able to move the work forward in a way that balanced these two competing priorities.

**Transitions in staffing presented both challenges and opportunities.** LHRW’s momentum slowed when two key staff members, including the project coordinator, departed from LHRW. These staff transitions made it difficult to maintain the work plan initially envisioned. Changes were made to LHRW’s work plan and timelines to reflect the organization’s capacity and new areas of focus with a new coordinator in place. There were also benefits to these staffing transitions, as LHRW continues to have a positive relationship with the former director, who is now the city’s Community Engagement Specialist.

## Moving forward

As the ALfA initiative comes to an end, LHRW is positioned to continue much of the work it started.

**New projects.** LHRW was able to leverage their ALfA funds into new projects that will continue after the ALfA initiative is over: Neighborhood Revitalization in the East End and If This Bluff Could Talk. The purpose of the Neighborhood Revitalization in the East End project is to create a park that reflects the diversity of the neighborhood and instills a sense of community pride for its residents. The purpose of If This Bluff Can Talk is to engage the community in telling a variety of stories about Red Wing’s historical landmark: HeMni Can-Barn Bluff. Both of these projects, which began after July 2018, engage multiple stakeholders including community and organizations, leverage the partnerships built during the ALfA initiative, and are examples of the work LHRW will continue to be involved in.

**Current projects.** Several projects will continue past the end of ALfA. These include: Bus Stop & Walk, which is a program to encourage physical activity before school by having students dropped off at designated locations in order to walk the last 10 minutes, Spring Map Delivery to 35 local businesses, City Bike-ability assessment, and a leisure and fitness campaign with Live Well Goodhue County called A Bicycle for Transportation. LHRW will also continue to share resources and information about active living via the Fit Tips column in the local paper, their website, and social media.

**Partnerships.** LHRW will maintain a presence at several partnership tables. These include the RW2040 Strategy Team, Hunger Free Kids Network, Statewide Health Improvement Partnership in Goodhue County, Live Well Goodhue County, and the Health & Human Services Community Health Assessment & Community Health Improvement Program. Unfortunately, the Latino Leadership Community no longer meets; however, the leader from Hispanic Outreach joined the LHRW team in December 2017.

**Policy work.** LHRW is committed to continuing their racial equity work and promoting active living for all in their community. The City Council approved Resolution 7311 to Create, Maintain, and Strengthen Local Policies that Uphold the Rights of All Residents and Monitor Federal Policies on How They Affect Local Residents. This resolution reiterated the council's commitment to using an equity and "health in all policy" approach.

**Sustainability.** LHRW will continue to fund the Coordinator at 0.5FTE and the Communications Assistant at 0.25FTE. In addition, LHRW has secured additional funding from multiple sources, has a few pending requests to support their work in the park system and the Red Wing High School Food Shelf, and is planning to apply for other funding to support their continued work.

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