Hear from our community:
CEDAR-RIVERSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD IN MINNEAPOLIS

Safe Routes to School helps more kids walk and bicycle to school more often through infrastructure improvements, education and promotion of walking/biking activities (Minnesota Statutes 2013 174.40).

This project aims to take a step towards achieving health equity by bridging the information gaps that exist between underserved communities, research, and health policy. Identifying community needs and conveying the findings to multiple decision-makers better positions the community to gain access to Safe Routes to School grants.

The purpose of this project is to improve conditions so that all communities can realize the benefits of active living.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• Mend cracked sidewalks and other hazards.
• Install proper crossing signs.
• Educate community members on how to read/use crossing signs.
• Address crime and physical safety by increasing positive police interactions.
• Enforce existing no-smoking codes on community properties.
• Incorporate more green space in the neighborhood.

CURRENT CHALLENGES
Residents expressed strong concerns about cracked sidewalks, lack of lighting, and lack of signage for proper crossing, as well as a general lack of understanding on how to read and follow signage. Participants shared that inconsistent de-icing and plowing presents a constant hazard during the winter months. Residents identified the lack of appealing green spaces in the neighborhood, and noted that kids frequently have to walk through cigarette smoke, triggering Asthma and other health issues.
Two convenings were conducted one with youth (n=~10) and one with parents and grandparents (n=~45-55). Residents mainly comprised Somalis who lived in the Cedar Riverside Plaza apartments. Brian Coyle Staff (Abdullahi Sheikh) organized the listening sessions with financial and technical support from PHDR (University of Minnesota Program in Health Disparities Research).

MEETING LOCATION: BRIAN COYLE COMMUNITY CENTER, 420 15TH AVENUE SOUTH, MINNEAPOLIS
MEETING DATES: MARCH 19, 2014 AND MARCH 20, 2014

NOTES FROM THE MEETINGS

**Pedestrian Safety Concerns**

**PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS**
Residents overwhelmingly voiced concerns related to pedestrian safety. Residents cited the lack of enough stop signs, traffic lights, visible speed limits, speed bumps and other infrastructure designed to increase pedestrian safety. Residents also cited weather-related mitigators of physical activity, including but not limited to distance from school, and unsalted streets and sidewalks around the Cedar-Riverside complex. A separate convening for youth who reside in the complex revealed similar themes.

**SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**
Residents expressed a need for cross walks, speed bumps, traffic lights and stop signs in the streets surrounding the plaza. Youth participants expressed a strong need for guided (adult chaperone) bike rides. Residents also cited a strong need for bike routes and clearly identified walking routes. Residents overwhelmingly identified the major city and county roads surrounding the plaza as a major concern for pedestrian and bike accidents.

**Crime-Related Concerns**

**PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS**
Residents cited concerns around the overcrowding on school buses as a catalyst for school bus-related fights. Residents cited concerns around the lack of enough peace officers on the residential site as a deterrent of their children’s outdoor physical activity. Residents also cited the prevalence of smoking of tobacco-related products on park and building grounds. Residents acknowledged that while there were bans in place to prevent this, compliance to these rules is minimal and repercussions are rarely instituted if ever. A separate youth convening also revealed similar themes related to second hand smoke a major mitigant of outdoor physical activity.

**SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**
Residents recommended the greater frequency and consistency of police patrols in the neighborhood. Residents expressed a strong need for teen-centered social programs designed to deter youth from joining gangs. Residents also requested stronger enforcement of smoking bans in the residential facility and the surrounding parks. Senior residents expressed a strong willingness to be utilized as resources and assets in whatever policy intervention that is designed to increase public safety in the Cedar Riverside Plaza.

**Education, Socioeconomic and Other Related Concerns**

**PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS**
Some residents with physical mobility issues voiced strong concerns related to the accessibility of the Cedar Riverside Plaza building structure, especially during winter months when salting and plowing are inconsistent. Community members cited concerns related to the environmental allergens as strong mitigators of physical activity (smoking, dust and dirt). Residents also expressed concerns related to the general upkeep of the Cedar Riverside Plaza buildings.

**SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**
Residents expressed a general need for better onsite public facilities, a need for the reduction of environmental allergens (smoking and dust). Residents requested interventions centered on beautification of the plaza and the surrounding area. A separate convening for youth also revealed strong concerns related to the prevalence of smoking and recommendations advocated for the reduction of outdoor smoking in parks and the sale of tobacco products that were enticing to children in area grocery stores.

**Assets/Knowledge of Community Resources**

When parents were asked if they knew of any programs that were designed to increase physical activity among their children and their communities, they overwhelmingly said no. They said that they did not know of any programs. Parents felt like there were no safe places for their kids to ride their bikes. They also reiterated the poor state of sidewalks, particularly in the winter when they are not salted and de-iced enough. Participants cited quite a few community assets. When residents were asked about community assets they cited Plaza apartments as a major geographic hub (light rail and bus routes). Participants also cited their community’s connectedness as major asset. Participants also cited the availability of cultural competence, such as Brian Coyle Center. Participants also cited the availability of Money Wire Transfer Organizations that are instrumental in helping them send financial aid to their families back home. Participants also cited the importance of religious centers like mosques as major community assets.