

# **Allegany County, Maryland**

## **Community Walking/Walkability Plan**

### **Vision**

Walking should be recognized, accommodated and funded as a legitimate and essential mode of transportation. Walking promotes wellness, enhanced quality of life, and a cleaner environment. Allegany County has great resources for recreation walking; however, there are challenges to safe and effective walking to conduct daily life activities.

### **Guiding Principles**

- Walking is healthy, safe, economical, accessible and fun.
- Everyone should feel safe while walking.
- Walking can be impacted through collaboration, education, appropriate legislation, and improved infrastructure.
- Walking provides a simple and inexpensive way to promote health and wellbeing.
- Collaboration, assessment, planning and evaluation are critical to developing a strong walking community.

### **Background**

Allegany County is located in the Western part of the state of Maryland. There are two primary towns, Cumberland and Frostburg, with several smaller communities totaling 72,000+ residents in the county. The county is one of the poorer counties in the state, with an average household income of \$44,700 versus \$77,800 for the state. The population in Allegany County is much older than the rest of the state. The county topographic makeup is mostly mountainous making it difficult for older residents to get out and walk. Other than the main towns mentioned above there are limited sidewalks available for walking, with many in need of repair.

Allegany county ranks 20<sup>th</sup> out of 24 in the state's county health ranking (2018). Factors that affect walking include:

- 17% of residents report fair or poor health
- 8.1 days in the last 30 days average – poor physical and mental health days reported
  - 3.8 days for poor physical health
  - 4.3 days for poor mental health
- 28% of population are physically inactive
- 35% of population are obese

## **Community Partnership**

Western Maryland Health System, Employee Wellness - Diedra Cornet, Employee Wellness Coordinator

Rocky Gap State Park – Sarah Milbourne, Park Manager

Area Health Education Center Western Chapter (AHEC West) – Amanda Heavner, Administrative Specialist

Frostburg State College – Lee Ann Nightingale, Manager of Benefits & Wellness Program, Office of Human Resources

Allegany County Health Department Chronic Disease Program– Rachel Flanagan, Chronic Disease Grant Coordinator; Bill Lafferty, Community Outreach Coordinator; Lynn Kane, Director of Nursing and Physical Health

Make Healthy Choices Easy workgroup – Pam Jan, Health and Resource Coach, Western Maryland Health System

Allegany County Department of Public Works – Siera Wigfield, Planner and Recycling Coordinator.

The mission statements of each of the partners center around improving the health and well being of the people in Allegany County through education and promotion of health. Walking can be a key factor in addressing each mission/ vision statement.

The mission and vision statements of some of our partners include:

- Allegany County Health Department – Vision statement “Healthy People Healthy Community” and the Mission Statement – “Promote physical, behavioral, and environmental health and prevent disease and disabilities of the people of Allegany County.”
- AHEC West Mission Statement – “To improve access to and promote quality in health care through education and partnerships.”
- Western Maryland Health System – Mission Statement – “We are dedicated to providing patient centered care and improving the health and wellbeing of the people in the community we serve”. The vision of WMHS – “Shaping dynamic partnerships in advancing health and wellbeing”.

## **Team Goals**

1. By September 30, 2018, cultivate strategic partnerships with organizations and agencies to meet and discuss walking resources and barriers in Allegany County.

2. By September 30, 2018, develop and implement outreach and communications strategies to promote walking as appealing, safe, and accessible.
3. By September 30, 2018, implement a bidirectional program with Allegany County medical providers to refer clients at risk for chronic disease namely pre-hypertension and pre-diabetes, to “Prescribe Nature” by referring to Rocky Gap State Park for free physical and nutritional activities.
4. By September 30, 2018, encourage and support local businesses in incorporating walking as part of the workplace policy.
5. By September 30, 2018 and beyond, work with the Allegany County Department of Public Works and review program to connect trails in Allegany County to the C&O Tow Path and the Great Appalachian Trail for walking.

## **Strategic Plan and Timeline**

### **Goal 1:**

By September 30, 2018, cultivate strategic partnerships with organizations and agencies to meet and discuss walking resources and barriers in Allegany County.

#### **Objectives:**

- By April 30, 2018: Inquire interest and recruit additional partners through e-mails, newsletter, personal contact and existing committees.
- By May 20, 2018: Schedule meeting date, time and location.
- By May 30, 2018: Have meeting for all community partners for input.
- By September 30, 2018: Working with partners to develop a sustainable walking strategies and plan.

### **Goal 2:**

By September 30, 2018, develop and implement outreach and communications strategies to promote walking as appealing, safe, and accessible.

#### **Objectives:**

- By May 15, 2018: Set up meetings with key partners (Healthiest Maryland Businesses, Make Health Choices Easy workgroup, Children’s Council, etc.) to develop strategies to promote the positive sides of walking.
- By May 30, 2018: Finalize and print a Walking Resources Guide for distribution.
- By June 15, 2018: Have a plan on how to reach population to increase walking as a safe, economical and easy way to become healthier.
- By September 30,2018: Execute the plan that will result in sustainability going forward.

- By September 30, 2018: Collaborate with local governments to develop safe walking improvement policy/recommendations throughout the county.

### Goal 3:

By September 30, 2018, implement a bidirectional program with Allegany County medical providers to refer clients at risk for chronic disease namely pre-hypertension and pre-diabetes, to “Prescribe Nature” by referring to Rocky Gap State Park for free physical and nutritional activities.

#### Objectives:

- By April 1, 2018: Develop and submit an MOU between Allegany County Health Department and Rocky Gap State Park to fund and carry-out “Prescribe Nature” bidirectional campaign.
- By April 30, 2018: Print prescription pads for providers to refer patients to Rocky Gap State Park activities.
- By May 15, 2018: Promote “Prescribe Nature” to the providers at provider meetings by RGSP Park Manager and staff.
- Between April 1, 2018 and September 30, 2018: Supplement the funds to implement the free physical and nutritional activities at Rocky Gap State Park including free park access.
- Between April 1, 2018 and September 30, 2018: Gather statistics on the number of prescriptions written by providers and number of participants.
- By May 30, 2018: Contact above counties to establish a multi-county work group that will meet by phone on scheduled basis.

### Goal 4:

By September 30, 2018, encourage and support local businesses to incorporate walking as part of workplace policy.

#### Objectives:

- By April 30, 2018: Contact 2 businesses and collaborate to develop agency policies encouraging walking for the employees.
- By May 15, 2018: Measure walking paths for businesses that have expressed interest.
- By May 30, 2018: Encourage the businesses to promote walking through contests and competitions.
- By September 30, 2018: Request data from worksite regarding number of participants utilizing the walking path.

- By September 30, 2018: Promote walking at Frostburg State University by providing signage and collaborating with FSU to formally recommend employees and students to utilize “Bobcat Walking Trail”.
- By September 30, 2018: Encourage businesses to create competition/challenges for employees involving walking.

Goal 5:

By September 30, 2018 and beyond, work with the Allegany County Department of Public Works to review plans to connect trails in Allegany County to the C&O Tow Path and the Great Appalachian Trail for walking.

- By September 30, 2018 revisit the in-depth study for developing and connecting walking and bicycling paths in the county developed by Allegany County Department of Public Works.
- By June 2019 and beyond market and promote the connection of trails to walk leaders, general population, businesses, tourism, etc.

Goal 6:

By September 30, 2018, encourage and support local community groups to promote walking through beautification efforts.

- By June 15, 2018: Assess opportunities in the community to promote walking by adding greenery, benches, etc. Get HMB feedback as well as individual survey of civic groups, sports complexes, etc.
- By September 30, 2018: Assist the HMB leaders and community groups in promoting walking through these esthetic efforts.

## **Challenges/Solutions**

Goal 1:

- Challenges: Time constraints. Finding time and dates that fit all partners’ schedule.
- Solution: Work with partners to find date and time that all agree.  
Having more than one time, or having the person phone-in.

Goal 2:

- Challenges: Time and/or apathy. Businesses willingness to allow outreach at the facility.
- Solutions: Develop outreach material that explains benefits of walking to the business.

#### Goal 3:

- Challenges: Getting people to attend sessions.  
Getting primary care to issue prescription pads.  
Transportation.  
Sustainability of Rocky Gap State Park program.
- Solutions: Have Rocky Gap instructors conduct classes where priority population reside. This will address transportation and could possibly increase attendance.  
Provide the primary care with easy to use prescription pads and follow-up to address any questions or concerns.  
To sustain program search for more funding opportunities that Rocky Gap State Park can apply.

#### Goal 4:

- Challenges: Local business resistance to develop policies. Most businesses need corporate approval to initiate a policy.  
Solution: Instead of a policy ask for a formal recommendation.

#### Goal 5:

- Funds to develop plan.  
Solution: Investigate possible grants that address walking and biking in rural communities.
- General apathy.  
Solution: Educate public on benefits of walking and biking.

#### Goal 6:

- Funding for efforts.  
Solution: Investigate possible grants that address walking and biking in rural communities.

### **Evaluation**

By September 30, 2018, cultivate strategic partnerships with organizations and agencies to meet and discuss walking resources and barriers in Allegany County as evidenced by number of meetings held and number of partners present.

By June 30, 2018, develop and implement outreach and communications strategies to promote walking as appealing, safe, and accessible as evidenced by strategies implemented.

By June 30, 2018, implement a bidirectional program with Allegany County medical providers to refer clients at risk for chronic disease namely pre-hypertension and pre-diabetes, to “Prescribe Nature” by referring to Rocky Gap State Park for free physical and nutritional activities as evidenced by number of prescriptions written and participants to the free physical and nutritional activities. Provide statistical data on number of prescriptions written and the number of prescriptions used.

By September 30, 2018, encourage and support local businesses in incorporating walking as part of workplace policy as evidenced by the number of businesses adopting workplace policies.

Between January 1-31, 2019 revisit Allegany County, Maryland Community Walking/Walkability Plan goals and objectives and revise as according to workgroup recommendations.

Created May 30, 2018

Revised: