

# Worcester County Walkability Plan

**Vision:** The Worcester County walk team will work to support the 2017-2020 Community Health Assessment in a long term effort to reduce the rates of chronic disease in the county. The team will work to promote walking and increase community engagement among the high priority population in Worcester County, while raising awareness around safe places to walk in towns such as Pocomoke, Snow Hill, Berlin, Ocean City, and the largest unincorporated community in the county, Ocean Pines. Based on 2012-2014 BRFSS data, approximately 32-percent of Worcester County adults are obese, moving steadily away from the healthy people 2020 goal of reducing the proportion of adults who are obese to 30.5-percent. An additional 36-percent are overweight (Table 1).

Table.1 Health Condition/Risk Factor	Worcester	Maryland
Overweight	36.5% (2012-2014)	35.8% (2012-2014)
Obese	31.7% (2012-2014)	28.5% (2012-2014)
No leisure time physical activities/exercises in the last 30 days	27.4% (2012-2014)	23.2% (2012-2014)
Total Serving Fruits /Vegetables Per Day (less than 5 times per day )	85.0% (2011-2013)	83.1% (2011-2013)
High Blood Pressure	36.7% (2011-2013)	32.8% (2011-2013)
High Cholesterol	44.5% (2011-2013)	36.2% (2011-2013)
Diabetes	16.7% (2012-2014)	10.2% (2012-2014)

Source: BRFSS

**Background:** Worcester County is very rural and is comprised of the incorporated towns of Pocomoke, Snow Hill, Berlin, and Ocean City in addition to the largest unincorporated community in the county, Ocean Pines. Many conditions affect community walking. Conditions include: having few destinations within walking distance, lack of sidewalks and paths, lack of public transportation, socioeconomic status, and the culture of physical inactivity. Public transportation is available but is more accessible for residents on the northern end of the county. The southern end of the county has limited access to public transportation. There is also a lack of personal motivation to walk in many towns. This aligns with the culture of physical inactivity. This may be due to the lack of information about places to walk or difficulty in finding safe, walkable spaces.

Creating more places to walk in the local community, and building support within each local town to promote physical activity, will help the Worcester County walk team address key physical activity issues in these communities. The team will also assess social-economic conditions that may pose as barriers. They will develop Walk Advocates in each town, and tailor walk events to meet the needs and interest of residents living in the identified local areas.

**Community Partnership:** The Worcester County walk team consists of the following members:

- Tiffany Scott, Worcester County Health Dept.
- Travis Brown, Worcester County Health Dept.(Walk Advocate)
- Kathy Wool, Worcester County Health Dept.
- Crystal Bell, Worcester County Health Dept.
- David Englehart, Town of Berlin (Planning professional)
- Stacey Norton, Worcester County (Worcester County Government)
- Kate Patton, Lower Shore Land Trust (Walk Advocate)
- Ed Tudor, Worcester County (Director of Development, Review, and Planning)
- Mike Hedlesky, Worcester County Recreation & Parks Department
- Mayor Gee Williams, Town of Berlin (local elected official)
- Karah Lacey, Town of Pocomoke (Economic Development Coordinator)
- Trish Goodsell, Town of Snow Hill (Assistant town manager)
- Alysson Dupont, Taylor Bank (Walking Group Leader)

**Team Goals:** The Worcester County walk team would like to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Encourage the culture of physical activity (**Long term goal**)
2. Increase partnerships and collaborative efforts (**Long term goal**)
3. Creating awareness around safe places to walk (**Short term goal**)
4. Establish Walk Advocates/groups in each town (**Short term goal**)
5. Increase utilization of Recreation and Parks facilities (**Long term goal**)
6. Create a *Just Walk* app (This app will highlight walking and biking trails in the county through drone imagery and GTS mapping) w/communication launch that engages local residents in using *Just Walk* app and community walking trails. (**Long term goal**)

**Goal 1: Encourage the culture of physical activity by the end of September 30, 2018.**

Objectives:

1. Encourage promotion of walking/physical activity 150 minutes per week.
2. Build support within the local community to support walking.
3. Identifying walk advocates in each community/create walk groups.
4. Creating healthy environments by making it easier to be physically active where we live, learn, work, play, and worship.
5. Improve and raise awareness about accessibility and the benefits of walking.
6. Identify specific areas and populations to target more dynamically.

**Goal 2: Increase partnerships and collaborative efforts by the end of September 30, 2018.**

Objectives:

1. Set up a meeting with the town of Berlin by end of July 2018 to discuss the Rails to Trails Project and plans for the year 2019. Planning and next steps TBD.
2. Set up a meeting with Worcester County Recreation and Parks by end of June 2018 to discuss co-hosting 2-4 events in the year 2019 that promote and support physical activity and walking. Event planning to begin September 1, 2018.
3. Set up a meeting with Lower Shore Land Trust by beginning of August 2018 to discuss existing projects and explore future partnerships in the year 2019. Planning to begin September 1, 2018.
4. Set up a meeting with Worcester County Board of Education mid-August 2018 to discuss partnering with local school events in the year 2019.
5. Partner with Main Street Berlin and Main Street Snow Hill by the end of September 2018 to co-sponsor (2) walk events.

**Goal 3: Raise awareness around safe places to walk by the end of August 31, 2018.**

Objectives:

1. Research and assess active transportation plans and the conditions in communities that support safe walking and bicycling to schools and other neighborhood destinations by June 2018.
2. Partner with Maryland State Highway to promote the *Walk Smart* initiative which raises awareness about pedestrian and bicycle safety and the importance of crosswalks by the year 2019.
3. Conduct walk audits within the local community/neighborhoods to assess safe and walkable routes by the end of year 2018.
4. Create a walk routes safe campaign for community residents by end of year 2018.
5. Create a list of safe places to walk to publicize by August 31, 2018.
6. Research active transportation and the conditions in a community that support safe walking and bicycling to schools and other neighborhood destinations by June 2018.

**Goal 4: Establish walk advocates/groups in each town by the end of August 31, 2018.**

Objectives:

1. Host walk advocate interests meeting in each community neighborhood by end of August 2018.
2. Create a walk advocate subcommittee by end of August 2018.

3. Host a Tri-County Walk Advocate training with Walk-2-Connect by end of September 2018.
4. Create walk groups within each community with advocates.
5. Walk Advocates to plan neighborhood walks in each town.

**Goal 5: Increase utilization of Recreation and Parks facilities by the end of September 30, 2018.**

Objectives:

1. Set up a meeting with Worcester County Recreation and Parks by end of June 2018 to discuss increasing utilization of Worcester County Recreation and parks facilities in the year 2019.
2. Market and promote Worcester Recreation and Parks events through cross-promotion.
3. Engage community partners to utilize Worcester County Recreation and Parks facilities to host events.

**Goal 6: Create a *Just Walk* website - (Expand Reach) by the end of September 30, 2018.**

Objectives:

1. Meet with website designer in beginning of July to discuss the creation of app design and review app design options.
2. Secure funds with MDH to support the development/implementation of a website by end of June 2018.
3. Begin phase 1 of website development by beginning of July 2018.
4. Complete phase 2 of website development by end of September 2018.
5. PR Launch an advertising campaign September mid-fall 2018.

Challenges:

1. Political and community support.
2. Regulation and policy barriers.
3. Time, staff, and funding sources.
4. Population influx, and changes.
5. Various needs of varied demographics
6. Marketing information to the target population
7. Consistency of social media-constantly evolving

Evaluation:

The Worcester County walk team will evaluate the process of walk activities and community reach through both quantitative and qualitative data. The *Just Walk* website will also be used to measure and evaluate *Just Walk* members and users. The number of participants at each walk event will be measured to see how many community residents are actually engaging in walk events and walk activities throughout the community. Walk messages and campaigns through social media will be analyzed through analytical reports.