HEAL NH is an initiative of the HNH Foundation and led by the Foundation for Healthy Communities
Table of Contents

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 3
  Park access and park use .................................................................................................................. 3
  The Economic case for parks and open space .............................................................................. 4
NH Active Recreation Inventory Project ............................................................................................. 6
  Active Recreation Inventory: Overall results for 10 census tracts ........................................... 8
  Active Recreation Inventory by urban/rural status .................................................................. 8
  Community interviews .................................................................................................................. 9
Summary ............................................................................................................................................. 12
References .......................................................................................................................................... 14

Appendix A: Active Recreation Workgroup Summary ................................................................. 17

Appendix B: NH Active Recreation Inventory:
  Map of targeted census tracts .................................................................................................... 20

Appendix C: Community Maps of Active Recreation Properties .............................................. 22

Appendix D: NH Case Studies ......................................................................................................... 33
Introduction

Although New Hampshire (NH) ranks as one of the healthiest states in the nation, overall health statistics obscure pockets of neighborhood-level health inequities. Notably, physical activity levels vary substantially across the state; lower levels of leisure-time physical activity and higher prevalence of obesity and diabetes are observed among persons of lower socio-economic status, those living in rurally-isolated areas of the state, and those living in the most racially and ethnically diverse urban neighborhoods (1-3).

Recreation spaces serve as places for residents to be physically active and forge social connections with others in their community. Living in close proximity to parks is an important predictor of physical activity and those who reside within a half a mile of a park are more likely to engage in physical activity than those who live farther away (4). This is especially important among youth where parks play an important role in promoting physical activity and active play (5).

Parks are often thought of as a common part of the community fabric. However, a closer look shows that disparities exist in lower income communities in terms of park distribution, quality, and access. In short, park distribution, park access, amenities and features, park conditions, and park use vary across different populations and neighborhoods (6-9).

This report offers a brief review of the literature surrounding recreation access and use and highlights the results an Active Recreation Inventory completed in ten NH communities by the Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) NH Active Recreation Workgroup as part of the NH Healthy People Healthy Places (HPHP) Plan (1). In addition to the inventory results, next steps for the workgroup as they work towards improving access to recreation opportunities are outlined.

Park Access and Park Use

People are more likely to be active on a regular basis if they live in walkable neighborhoods and have access to more places for exercise such as sidewalks, walking trails, and parks (11-13). Walking and bike routes in and around a neighborhood that are safe from traffic and crime make it easier to access recreation areas, present less barriers, and can influence resident choices to use recreation areas (14).

In the first national study of neighborhood parks in the United States, adults, seniors, and female youth demonstrate low use of parks. Additional findings also suggest lower park use in high-poverty areas. The authors of this study suggest enhancing park amenities to attract these populations such as adding walking loops and programmed activities geared towards older adults. Stronger outreach efforts and offering more supervised activities were suggested to increase use in low-income neighborhoods (15). Deborah Cohen, Senior Natural Scientist for the RAND Corporation and lead author of the study states, “Relatively modest investments could make parks much more conducive to physical activity for everyone, regardless of age, gender or income level.”
In 2016, the NH Disability and Public Health Report found that adults with any disability are significantly more likely to be sedentary than those with no disability. “Adults with mobility limitations (45%) or with multiple disabilities (43%) were more likely to report no exercise in the past 30 days,” the report states. Persons with disabilities also suffer much higher rates of obesity and chronic diseases such as cancer and diabetes (16). Recommendations for increasing levels of physical activity in adults with disabilities include “targeted and inclusive health promotion messages, fitness programs, and accessible recreational spaces and facilities (17).”

Several studies and reviews have noted the features in and on route to a park that can influence park use (14, 18-27). Among the most common features and amenities cited included:

- Playgrounds
- Sports facilities
- Paved or unpaved trails
- Good upkeep/condition of recreation facilities
- Enjoyable scenery
- Shade trees and other vegetation
- Seating and picnic areas
- Water features
- Perceived safety from crime or traffic
- Restrooms

The Economic Case for Parks and Open Spaces

A review and renewal of park space, including amenities and features offered, can be of great value to not only improving the health of a community, but can also prove to be of significant economic benefit.

Key findings from a recent study by the National Recreation and Parks Association and the Center for Regional Analysis at George Mason University support this notion (28). The study report, “The Economic Impact of Local Parks,” states that America’s local and regional public park agencies generated nearly $140 billion in economic activity and supported almost one million jobs in 2013. This includes 660,000 jobs and $80 billion in total economic activity created by operations spending and 340,000 jobs and $59.7 billion in economic activity income from capital spending.

These numbers not only reflect the actual operations and capital spending and jobs resulting from local and regional park and recreation agencies, but also includes the ripple effect of this spending throughout the economy. This takes several forms such as employee spending, vendor spending, and vendor employment opportunities.
In NH, the report found that local and regional park spending resulted in $212,896,528 of economic activity (transactions), $71,496,917 in labor income, and contributed 1,930 jobs in 2013.

Further economic benefits of parks and open space can be linked to their impact on property values. Parks and open spaces attract homebuyers and are shown to increase property values, encouraging economic development (29-32). Whether its young adults, growing families, or baby boomers, more people are looking for greater connectivity in their communities, including easier access to amenities such as parks and recreation spaces (29, 30). In 2001, Public Opinion Strategies conducted a survey for the National Association of Realtors and found that 50 percent of respondents would be willing to pay 10 percent more for a house located near a park or other protected open space. In the same survey, 57 percent of respondents stated that if they were in the market to buy a new home, they would be more likely to choose a neighborhood if it was close to parks and open space (30, 32).

While parks and recreation spaces that are aesthetically pleasing and offer a variety of amenities and features can be of great health and economic benefit, considering individual community needs and perceptions can bring great value to any initiative aimed at improving recreation access and use. To optimize the impact and the benefits of park and recreation space, engaging community residents to learn more about the cultural, environmental, and other factors that affect park use is an important first step. Community forums, focus groups, and participatory action research methods such as photovoice and GIS story mapping provide the opportunity to deepen understanding of what influences park use and participation in active recreation (33, 34). Providing a space to allow the voice of community residents to be heard is not only empowering, but can result in a more supportive and engaged community. In turn, engaged and empowered residents provide the backbone of effective strategy development, leading to better outcomes for improving park use and activity levels in communities and neighborhoods.

Several HEAL NH community partners have engaged and worked with residents to improve recreation access and use in their communities. See Appendix C for three inspiring case studies from Berlin, Laconia, and Nashua, NH. Lebanon Plays, in Lebanon, NH, is another project centered on improving playgrounds for children under the age of five (https://lebanonplays.wordpress.com/).
It is with the successes and lessons learned from these communities that the NH Active Recreation Workgroup moves forward in its goal of increasing access to recreation opportunities in NH.

**NH Active Recreation Inventory Project**

In 2014, partners and key stakeholders of the HEAL NH initiative developed the HPHP Plan, calling for the implementation of policy, systems, and environmental strategies aimed at improving the places where people live, learn, work, and play, particularly in NH’s most vulnerable communities. The HPHP Plan defines two main goals with four objectives and strategies for accomplishing the work. One of these objectives pertains to active recreation:

“All New Hampshire communities have access to indoor and outdoor recreation facilities within a reasonable distance.”

In September 2014, the HEAL Active Recreation Workgroup\(^1\) was formed to address this objective and to work towards accomplishing the following HPHP active recreation strategies (Appendix A):

1. **Strategy A**: Increase access to public and community facilities for physical activity through coordinated state-wide education, outreach, and advocacy for Joint Use Agreements, with a priority for highest need communities and neighborhoods.
2. **Strategy B**: Increase public and private investment to create and improve access to healthy and safe parks, playgrounds, and open spaces and other places for community recreation.
3. **Strategy C**: Increase use of parks, playgrounds, open space and other places for community recreation by highest need communities and neighborhoods through coordination and collaboration of staff, resources and incentives.

To begin, the workgroup agreed that an inventory of public recreation spaces in a sample of NH’s communities would be needed to gain a better understanding of what recreation access looks like in NH. Instead of developing a “one-size-fits-all” approach to accomplishing the active recreation objectives, we agreed getting a snapshot reflecting the perspectives and unique needs of NH communities was important and would be invaluable to the success of the work. Using this common understanding, the Active Recreation Inventory Project was created.

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**Active Recreation Workgroup members include:** Kerry Horne, NH Recreation and Parks Association and HealthTrust | Robert Barcelona, Recreation Management and Policy, UNH Dept. of Health and Human Services | Barbara McCahan, Center for Active Living and Healthy Communities, Plymouth State University | Katie Bush, Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services | Chris Thayer, Appalachian Mountain Club | Paul Coats, City of Lebanon Department of Recreation and Parks | Cindy Heath, GP RED | Mike Loomis, Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Health | Melissa Shaw, Colebrook Recreation | Sandy Olney, Adaptive Sports Partners of the North Country | Sara Rainer, University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability | Beth Gustafson Wheeler, HEAL NH/Foundation for Healthy Communities.
Phase 1: Active Recreation Inventory in NH’s Highest Need Communities

Phase 1 of the Active Recreation Inventory Project focused on identifying NH’s highest need communities (defined at the census tract level), using the NH DHHS Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) (35). The HPHP Plan defines “highest-need” communities and neighborhoods based on demographic (e.g., poverty, age, ethnicity, language), health status (e.g., heart disease and diabetes rates), and geographic (e.g., rural or urban isolation) characteristics. Ten (n=10) targeted census tracts spanning 14 municipalities were identified (Figure 1 and Appendix B), and an inventory of publicly accessible park and recreation spaces located in these communities was created between February 2015 - February 2016. Active recreation areas were then mapped for each community and visual data analysis was conducted using GIS (examples from Concord, NH can be seen in Figures 2a and 2b). Communities identified include: Berlin, Claremont, Greater Colebrook Region (Colebrook, Columbia, Stratford, Odell, Northumberland, and Stark), Concord, Hampton, Haverhill, Manchester, Nashua, Salem, and Winchester.

Figure 2a: Recreation properties in Concord, NH

Figure 2b: Recreation properties in Concord, NH showing neighborhoods falling within a ½ mile radius of individual properties.
Active Recreation Inventory: Overall Results for 10 Census Tracts

A total of 321 properties were identified and included in our overall analysis. Of the 321 properties, the most frequently occurring natural amenities were walking trails (33%) and bike paths (25%), followed by public fishing access (11%), ice skating (6%), and boating (6%). The most frequently occurring built amenities on these properties included playgrounds (38%), ball fields (including baseball/softball, soccer, and football) (32%), picnic areas (20%), basketball courts (23%), and tennis/racquet sports courts (10%) (Tables 1 and 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amenity Type</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>% Properties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walking Paths</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bike Paths</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice Skating</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boating</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunting</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amenity Type</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>% Properties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Playgrounds</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballfields (Baseball/softball, soccer, football)</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic Areas</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball Courts</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis/Racquet Courts</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice Skating Rink</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running Tracks</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skate Parks</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking at it another way, Table 3 shows properties by amenity type:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amenity Type</th>
<th># of Properties</th>
<th>% of Properties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural and Built</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Amenities</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Active Recreation Inventory by Urban/Rural Status

Of the 321 public recreation properties, 180 were located in urban areas and 141 were located in rural areas of the state (36).

Rural areas were more likely to have natural amenities such as walking trails, bike paths, motorized trails, and fishing opportunities. Urban areas were significantly more likely to have built amenities such as playgrounds, ball fields, and basketball courts.
Urban properties were significantly more likely to have built amenities such as:

- Playgrounds
- Ball fields
- Basketball courts

Rural areas were significantly more likely to be in close proximity to:

- Walking trails
- Bike paths
- Motorized trails
- Fishing opportunities

This phase 1 effort provided baseline information regarding the prevalence of public park and recreation resources in targeted communities. Our next step involved community interviews with parks and recreation directors, municipal staff, and/or town administrators to review the data gathered, identify any inconsistencies, and to discuss the status and their perspectives on park condition, access, and recreation funding.

**Community Interviews**

**Recreation Area Condition**

The condition of parks and recreation spaces vary across communities. While most of the communities report that they have recreation areas/parks in need of upgrades, more rural communities (Colebrook, Haverhill) report a higher number of condition problems than the smaller cities such as Claremont, Salem, Concord, and Berlin. Larger cities, Manchester and Nashua, also report some condition issues. Nashua reports that regular maintenance of parks can be a challenge with the small pocket parks and fields specifically needing more upkeep. In a 2014 participatory photovoice project in Manchester, teen residents expressed concerns regarding the condition of some neighborhood parks as well as sidewalks leading to parks (33).

**Recreation Access**

In our interviews, those living in more rural areas report that residents experience significant distance barriers when walking or biking to recreation assets. Many residents live along state routes and rural roads far from town centers, which results in recreational assets to not be within walking distance and biking on state routes and rural roads is not considered an option.

“At the Elmwood projects, the nets are torn and backboards and rims are weak. I have to play here because it is not safe at the other parks.” – A.L., 14

Source: Youth Photovoice Project: Creating Safe Neighborhoods. Manchester, NH (33)
More urban areas such as Nashua, Concord, and Manchester have initiated efforts to improve access. Nashua offers free bus passes in the summer so children can safely travel to parks. Concord hires a crossing guard in a high traffic area along Loudon Road in the summer to help children cross the street to use Keach Park and the community pool. The City of Manchester is working with Gossler Park School to improve active play opportunities for the students as well as the surrounding neighborhood. They are currently planning for the relocation of the playground area from the back to the front of the school. This puts the playground in sight of the neighborhood, providing more eyes on the playground and a positive presence for safe play.

**Joint Use Agreements**

Most communities have Joint Use Agreements. Many of these agreements are between recreation departments, municipalities and schools. Other partners in these agreements include hospitals, YMCAs, Snowmobile/ATV clubs, and Boys and Girls Clubs. Most are written agreements though some verbal agreements exist. Table 4 shows what we found regarding the JUA status in the ten communities.

### Table 4: Joint Use Agreement (JUA) Status in Ten Communities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Partners</th>
<th>Written or Verbal</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Colebrook | Recreation Department and elementary school | Verbal | Recreation Department uses  
  • Office space  
  • Recreation space-programming  
  • After school and summer programs |
| Claremont |  
  • School district and City  
  • Valley Regional Hospital and Recreation Center  
  • City and snowmobile/ATV clubs | Written | Recreation and athletics |
| Concord |  
  • Schools and YMCA  
  • Schools and Boys and Girls Club  
  • Schools and Parks & Recreation Department  
  • Recreation leagues and schools | Written |  
  • After school programs  
  • Basketball leagues  
  • Sports league games, pick-up games.  
  • Open gym has been offered in the past but was used by residents infrequently. |
| Haverhill | Municipality, schools, Recreation Department:  
  • Community pool and Summer Recreation Department  
  • Haverhill Cooperative Middle School and | Written/MOU |  
  • Summer camp use of pool  
  • Recreation programming |
Recreation Dept.
• James R. Morrill Municipal Building and Recreation.

Manchester
• Recreation Department and schools
• Manchester Health Department (MHD) and schools- Family Success Coordinators and Community Health Workers
• YMCA and Boys and Girls Club with schools
• School properties are publicly accessible during out of school hours—except Wilson is not accessible.

JUA’s are mostly written. The MHD has a written agreement, via email, for use of the schools (though not formerly signed). The MHD has MOU’s with the organizations they work with to provide services in the schools (i.e., community health workers and the family success coordinators). Liability is addressed in these MOU’s.

YMCA and Boys and Girls Club do have written agreements to use schools for after school programs.

Recreation Department and schools- events, basketball league. Manchester Recreation Department manages the grounds for public schools.

• Recreation Department and schools- events, basketball league. Manchester Recreation Department manages the grounds for public schools.
• MHD and Schools- Family Success Coordinators and community Health Workers
• YMCA and Boys and Girls- after school programs

Most school properties are publicly accessible during out of school hours. Wilson Elementary is not publicly accessible.

Nashua Parks & Recreation Department and schools
• Parks and Recreation plow for them and they get to use the school

Salem Town Recreation Department and School District
• Written (in the policies requesting facilities)

• Recreation sports leagues
• Recreation programming
• General public access

* Non-responses regarding JUA use from Winchester, Hampton, and Berlin are not shown.

Funding

Data gathered from the community interviews reflect 50% of the targeted 10 communities due to lack of response. Out of these five, several reported feeling under-resourced when it comes to funding for parks and recreation. Our interview data appears to reflect that rurally isolated communities and large urban communities in particular experience more funding inadequacies than mid-sized communities. Lack of adequate funding is reflected in staffing and maintenance issues as well as safety concerns. Only one park director described a particularly effective working relationship with the city and its Capital Improvement Project (CIP) process. Every 5-8 years the recreation department receives money from CIP for tennis and basketball courts. The City is supportive of recreation and ensuring the safety of its parks. They can get funding requests reviewed and discussed easier than other towns, especially when it is a safety issue.
As we look towards improving funding for community parks and recreation, it should be noted that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has driven the development of various health reform strategies. One example would be “Place-Based Initiatives” which seek to improve community health through coordinated preventative measures (37). Specifically, the ACA highlights social, environmental, infrastructural, and financial provisions which promote affordable, equitable, and effective services within communities. Importantly, the ACA also provides new funding mechanisms for these initiatives through hospitals’ Community Benefit Funds. Hospitals across the country are now using these funds to support active recreation strategies (38, 39).

Summary

Parks are important features in the fabric of a community. They provide a place to play, be active, socialize and connect with others in the community and are of great health and economic benefit.

This work comprises the first phase of a multi-phase plan to address equitable access to park and recreation spaces. The Active Recreation Inventory provided baseline information regarding the prevalence of public park and recreation resources in the 10 target communities.

These findings have important implications for active living. Prior research suggests that moderate-to-vigorous physical activity is more likely to occur in parks that have athletic courts, sports fields, and playgrounds (18). Research also suggests that parks with trails or walking paths are more likely to be used for physical activity compared to parks without trails (19). Thus, community partners will need to consider how amenities may be improved to better support physical activity while balancing other goals. Additional partners who have an interest in addressing the health and economic benefits of parks have an opportunity to participate in community partnerships to align goals and identify synergies.

It should be noted that our data has limitations. In addition to park distribution and amenities offered, other key attributes known to influence park use include condition, aesthetics, transportation, and safety. While interviews with recreation directors and municipal administrators were conducted to assess several of these factors, residents can offer the perspective of the user in terms of accessing recreation opportunities. Strategies that address community perceptions and needs should be considered.

Next Steps

The Active Recreation Workgroup has determined that additional community-level assessment in the ten communities is needed to 1) understand how access to active recreation opportunities is perceived by residents; 2) identify the constraints and barriers faced by residents in accessing active recreation resources; 3) discover the needs of residents for active recreation resources and
infrastructure; and 4) develop a community engagement process that can lead to improving access to active recreation opportunities in these NH communities.

Going forward, the Active Recreation Workgroup is working diligently to move to the next phase of this work and will be actively pursuing funding opportunities to:

- promote and support the implementation of community engagement projects in the 10 target communities. These projects will be aimed at gathering resident feedback and ideas regarding recreation access including barriers, needs and opportunities for improving recreation in their respective communities.
- support recreation and park improvement projects in NH’s most vulnerable communities.
- assist recreation champions and stakeholders in advocating for increases in funding to improve safe access to and participation in active recreation opportunities in NH’s most vulnerable communities.

For more information on the Healthy People Healthy Places Plan and the Active Recreation Workgroup, please visit www.HEALnh.org. All questions regarding this work can be directed to Beth Gustafson Wheeler at the Foundation for Healthy Communities at bwheeler@healthynh.com.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Active Recreation Workgroup Summary
ABOUT THE ACTIVE RECREATION WORKGROUP

The Active Recreation Workgroup was formed in 2014 in response to the development of the 2015-2019 Healthy People Healthy Places (HPHP) Plan. The Workgroup is made up of partners from across NH who are interested in increasing access to places to play and recreate for NH residents.

GOAL

NH Residents have equitable access to options for getting around, and safe, high-quality places to play and be active.

ACTIVE RECREATION OBJECTIVE (HPHP PLAN OBJECTIVE #2)

All NH communities have access to indoor and outdoor recreation facilities within a reasonable distance.

ACTIVE RECREATION STRATEGIES

The activities of the Active Recreation Workgroup are aimed at accomplishing three strategies.

**Strategy A: JOINT USE AGREEMENTS**

Increase access to public and community facilities for physical activity through coordinated statewide education, outreach and advocacy for Joint Use Agreements, with a priority for highest need communities and neighborhoods.

**Outcome 1:** By 2016, establish a database of the public and community facilities throughout New Hampshire, and identify those with Joint Use Agreements.

**Outcome 2:** By 2016, establish an advocacy network to encourage the development and enactment of Joint Use Agreements statewide.

**Outcome 3:** By 2016, develop a toolkit for Joint Use Agreements and collaborate with NH agencies to distribute statewide.

**Strategy B: PUBLIC & PRIVATE INVESTMENT**

Increase public and private investment to create and improve access to healthy and safe parks, playgrounds, open spaces, and other places for community recreation.

**Outcome 1:** By 2016, complete assessment of public and private investment in local recreation infrastructure.

**Outcome 2:** By 2018, establish and begin initial implementation of a strategy for increasing public and private support for recreation investment.

**Strategy C: INCREASE USE**

Increase use of parks, playgrounds, open space, and other places for community recreation by highest need communities and neighborhoods through coordination and collaboration of staff, resources, and incentives.

**Outcome 1:** By 2015, develop a multi-sector state level network comprised of community recreation managers, program staff and others to inform the use of state and local recreation and parks by highest need communities and neighborhoods.

**Outcome 2:** By 2017, establish guidance for increasing use of parks, playgrounds, open space, and other community recreation places in high need communities and neighborhoods.
In the Spring of 2015, HEAL NH’s Active Recreation Workgroup began a project to inventory park and recreation space in a sample of NH’s high need communities. Students and faculty from the University of New Hampshire and Plymouth State University, in addition to members of HEAL NH’s Active Recreation workgroup, are helping to complete the inventory and map the recreation areas in each of the communities.

The purpose of the Active Recreation Inventory is to look at NH’s high-need communities to identify:
• The amount and type of recreation and park space available;
• Neighborhoods that lack proximity to park and recreation space; and
• Potential barriers to accessing safe and healthy active recreation opportunities.

The results of this inventory will be used to:
• Report on the state of recreation access in NH’s high need communities;
• Develop a messaging campaign;
• Advocate for increased funding for improved recreation access; and
• Acquire funding to support recreation and park improvement projects in NH’s high need communities.

“Joint use” or “shared use” are terms that describe what happens when government entities (or sometimes private or nonprofit organizations) agree to open or broaden access to their property or facilities to benefit the larger community. When used to increase access to recreation facilities, Joint Use Agreements can play an important role in increasing recreation and physical activity opportunities for children and their families.

The Active Recreation workgroup promotes the use of Joint Use Agreements as a strategy to increase safe access to active recreation opportunities. Our Joint Use Agreement work is focused on 3 activities:
• Supporting research at UNH to identify the use and status of Joint Use Agreements in NH;
• Creating a Joint Use Agreement resource page at www.NHRPA.org that includes information and examples of Joint Use Agreements for widespread use by communities; and
• Advocating for the use of Joint Use Agreements to create better access to recreation in NH communities.

FMI: www.HealNH.org
Contact: Beth Wheeler
e-mail: bwheeler@HealNH.org
Appendix B

NH Active Recreation Inventory
Map of Census Tracts
HEAL NH Active Recreation Inventory with Social Vulnerability Index

Source: Social Vulnerability Index created by NH DHHS EPHT Program.
Recreation Inventory completed by HEAL NH Active Recreation Work Group.
Appendix C

Community Maps of Active Recreation Properties
Hampton, NH

HEAL NH Active Recreation Inventory
Community Summary: Hampton, NH
Half Mile Buffer

HEAL NH Active Recreation Inventory
Community Summary: Hampton, NH
Half Mile Buffer
Winchester, NH

HEAL NH Active Recreation Inventory
Community Summary: Winchester, NH
Half Mile Buffer

Map created by: NH DEHS EPHT Program
Sources: Social Vulnerability Index created by NH DEHS EPHT Program
Recreation Inventory created by HEAL NH Active Recreation Work Group
NH Grand Hydrography Dataset
Appendix D

Case Studies
from New Hampshire
Berlin HEAL
COMMUNITY GARDEN & PARK PROJECT

“Through Berlin HEAL’s community meetings, residents told us they wanted community garden space closer to the downtown. With the help of city-wide partners and community members, we are able to create that space!”

Angela Martin-Giroux
Administrator of Welfare & Health Officer
City of Berlin

Berlin’s Top HEAL Strategies

• Develop a community garden and playground by repurposing a green space left by the demolition of dilapidated housing

• Develop Complete Streets guidelines to increase pedestrian and bicycle safety

• Install wayfinding signs for local trails and walking routes in the City

HEAL NH • Healthy People Healthy Places • www.healnh.org

HEAL NH funding is provided by HNH Foundation, Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation, Endowment for Health, NH Charitable Foundation, and NH Department of Health and Human Services.
Berlin has a population of 9,500 residents and is the largest city in Coos County, NH.

Prevalence of overweight (36.9%) and obesity (31.9%) was the highest among Coos County residents when compared with state averages. Similarly, the prevalence of reported no leisure-time physical activity (29.5%), cardiovascular disease (5.9%), and diabetes (14.9%) was the highest among adults living in Coos County.

Poverty and unemployment rates in Berlin are approximately double that of the state average with a poverty rate of 16.6% (vs. 8.7% NH avg.) and unemployment at 7.4% (vs. 3.1% NH avg.). Of the 1,292 children enrolled in the public school system, nearly 50% (693) receive free or reduced lunch.

The Berlin HEAL projects focused on improved access to healthy food options and safe physical activity in downtown Berlin.


Healthy People Healthy Places:
Addressing Obesity in New Hampshire

In 2008, New Hampshire’s first Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Action Plan was launched, followed by the release of the state’s second obesity prevention plan in 2014, the Healthy People Healthy Places Plan. These plans were developed through a collaborative effort of public- and private-sector partners to address the increasing overweight and obesity rates within the state’s population, particularly in highest need communities.

Since 2008, the HEAL Home at the Foundation for Healthy Communities has led implementation of the healthy eating active living strategies outlined in these plans with support from philanthropic and government organizations, and partners across multiple sectors, including public health, land use and planning, transportation, education, health care, and food systems. The HEAL Community Grant Program (CGP), was established in 2009 to provide funding and technical support to promote healthier people and places at the local level. In 2009, four community coalitions received three-year grants of $150,000. In 2012, four more coalitions – Ashland, Berlin, Laconia, and Nashua – received two-year $10,000 grants. The HEAL Home provides communications, community assessment, and coalition building technical assistance. This case study highlights the Berlin HEAL coalition’s achievements and progress.

Berlin HEAL’s Priorities and Partners

HEAL funding initiated a municipal project to improve the environment in Berlin’s downtown to make it easier and safer to be physically active and to provide more options for fresh, healthy food. The Berlin HEAL coalition was led by the Berlin City Health and Welfare Departments. Multi-sector partnerships throughout the process included:

- City of Berlin/Health & Welfare
- City of Berlin/Housing Coordinator
- Parks and Recreation Dept.
- Coos County Family Health Services
- UNH Cooperative Extension
- North Country Health Coalition
- Retired Seniors Volunteer Partners (RSVP)
- Berlin Public School District / SAU 3
- Enriched Learning Center in Berlin
- Androscoggin Community Partners
- Northern Human Services
- Tri County Cap
- Neighbors and citizens
- Salvation Army
- Senior Center

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Community Garden & Park

**Goal:** Increase access to healthy food and physical activity for Mason and Granite Streets neighborhood residents
- Provide a space and the opportunity for area residents to grow their own vegetables in their neighborhood
- Use the garden to teach gardening skills to people of all ages
- Provide a space for children and families to play and be physically active

In early 2013, Berlin decided to repurpose a property on the corner of Mason and Granite Streets, demolishing a dilapidated apartment building to make room for a community garden and park. Funding came from HEAL NH and a Neighborhood Stabilization Project grant.

Located in a neighborhood where residents had to travel over a mile to get to a park for recreation, the park was designed for people of all ages and abilities to enjoy and be active. A swing set was installed for children, a fence around the perimeter increased safety, and shade trees were planted. The garden was built with 10 raised garden beds, including two with ADA compliant transfer benches for gardeners in wheelchairs. All the beds are now being utilized with two plots taken by Community Service Center, an organization that assists developmentally disabled adults, and another one for youth and family activities organized by the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC).

When the park first opened in Spring 2014, neighborhood families immediately began enjoying the facility... but, it did not yet have a name. The City conducted a “Name the Park” contest for elementary school students. The winning submission, “Friendship Park,” was from a third-grader, Isaiah Waninger, who received a new bicycle and helmet as a prize. The official grand opening celebration was in Spring 2015. Since the park first opened, there have been several improvements and activities added to the park. Three free-standing 55 gallon rain barrels were installed to meet water needs. Summer camp is now offered at the park for neighborhood children and subsidized lunch is offered through the USDA Summer Food Service Program. AHEAD (Affordable Housing, Education & Development) helped build a permanent shade canopy in the park to make the space even more inviting.

**HEAL Efforts Continue in Berlin**

The success of the Friendship Community Garden and Park motivated the city to expand its parks with gardens to three other locations: Community Field, Brown School, and Brookside. In 2015, Berlin received a Harvard Pilgrim Healthy Food Fund Grant which enabled them to hire a summer gardener who worked with children at the four playground sites to establish gardens, teach gardening, and share the produce. The grant also allowed for the purchase of equipment cabins and gardening tools. Berlin also received a Community Facilities grant for permanent canopies over the picnic tables for the Community Field and Brown School parks.

Berlin HEAL will continue to advocate for adopting Complete Streets language that provides a reminder for the City to consider all users during street renovations and planning. The City is working on a new sign system, and the coalition is advocating for including wayfinding signs that promoting walking as part of that project.

Further, in 2015, Berlin and its partners, Coos County Family Health Services, AMC, UNH Cooperative Extension, and Dr. Traci Wagner, received a Tillotson grant for a two-year pilot focusing on healthy eating and physical activity programming through a prescription model.
COUNCIL APPROVES PARK PLANS

Excerpts from article published May 7, 2013

BERLIN – The city council gave its blessing Monday night to two proposals for projects that will create small parks in different sections of the city.

One, at 3 Glen Avenue, will clean up the southern entrance to the downtown and provide general and handicap parking. The other, at 115 Mason Street, will expand an existing park to provide a small playground and community garden space. In both cases, the land was or will be obtained from demolishing dilapidated buildings the city obtained through tax deed...

...The [Mason Street] project, developed by city staff, calls for a mixed-use park and community garden area at 115 Mason Street. Former Housing Coordinator Andre Caron created a small park area a couple of years ago at the corner of Granite and Mason Streets but the city postponed developing the park further because it appeared the city would obtain the 115 Mason Street property by tax deed. The city did get the property and earlier this year demolished the building.

The city has $26,750 left from its first Neighborhood Stabilization Program grant for the project. [Housing Coordinator Linda] White developed a budget that includes some playground equipment, picnic tables, and fencing for the park. She also included in the budget money for summer playground staff time and park maintenance. Money for the raised garden beds and soil will be covered by funds from a Healthy Eating Active Living grant.

There will be parking at the site for three cars. Initial plans call for 12 to 14 raised garden beds that will be assigned to interested residents through Berlin Parks and Recreation.

White said she hopes to get the project underway immediately so the park can be available for use this summer. The council formally voted to approve both projects.
Lakes Region HEAL
CASE STUDY: WYATT PARK REVITALIZATION PROJECT

“We had recently done road upgrades on the street sections adjacent to Wyatt Park, but we hadn’t addressed accessibility improvements to the adjacent sidewalk. The HEAL Grant initiative prompted us to revisit the pedestrian and active transportation needs at this site and to broaden our view to accomplish similar improvements on other city roadway upgrade projects in the future.”

Paul Moynihan, Director
City of Laconia Public Works Department

Lakes Region HEAL’s
Wyatt Park Revitalization Project Achievements

Park renovation turned an under-utilized park into a community hub

DPW support helped increase neighborhood walkability and safe access to the park

The HEAL grant, along with community support, helped leverage additional City funding
Healthy People Healthy Places:
Addressing Obesity in New Hampshire

In 2008, New Hampshire’s first Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Action Plan was launched, followed by the development of the state’s second obesity prevention plan in 2014, the Healthy People Healthy Places Plan. These plans were developed through a collaborative effort of public- and private-sector partners to address the increasing overweight and obesity rates within the state’s population, particularly in underserved communities.

Since 2008, the HEAL NH has managed and helped implement the healthy eating active living strategies outlined in these plans with support from philanthropic and government organizations. Partners have been engaged and strategies aligned across multiple sectors, including public health, land use and planning, transportation, education, health care, and food systems. One of the strategies, the HEAL Community Grant Program (CGP), was established in 2009 to provide funding and technical support to promote healthier people and places at the local level. In 2009, four community coalitions were selected to receive a three-year grant for $150,000 in the first round of the CGP. In 2012, four more coalitions – Ashland, Berlin, Laconia, and Nashua – were selected to receive a two-year grant of $10,000. Communities were also provided substantial technical assistance in the areas of communications, community organizing, and coalition building. This case study focuses on the achievements of the Lakes Region HEAL coalition and its progress toward creating and improving opportunities for healthy food and physical activity for its community members in the Woodland Heights neighborhood around Wyatt Park in Laconia.

Lakes Region HEAL’s History

The Lakes Region HEAL was formed in 2009 after receiving a $150,000 grant from HEAL. Led by the Lakes Region Partnership for Public Health, the coalition worked in Laconia and nine rural towns to support healthy eating and active living strategies in schools (including early childcare and after schools), health care practices, and municipal settings. In the summer of 2010, Laconia SAU Superintendent, Lakes Region Partnership for Public Health Executive Director (LRPPH), Lakes Region United Way (LRUW) Community Development Director and Family Resource Center (FRC) partnered to form the Full Service Community School (FSCS) Steering Committee.

Through this committee, Laconia launched several initiatives including the formation of a Health and Wellness Academy at SAU that established four goals to 1) reduce obesity; 2) create a positive school/community climate; 3) increase access to health care; and 4) reduce substance use/abuse. The committee also identified opportunities for increased access to safe physical activity in the Wyatt Park-South End neighborhood in Laconia. The park was considered dangerous by many neighbors and was under-utilized by area residents.
Wyatt Park Revitalization Project

Wyatt Park Project Priorities and Partners

The Wyatt Park revitalization project in Laconia was developed in 2012 as a result of a two-year HEAL NH grant awarded to the City of Laconia in collaboration with Lakes Region HEAL. The grant was awarded to help Laconia identify and implement municipal strategies to support more choices for residents to eat healthy and be physically active in the neighborhood around Wyatt Park.

The Wyatt Park project was led by the Laconia Parks and Recreation Department, in partnership with the United Way, the Laconia Police, Wyatt Park Association, Department of Public Works, Lakes Region Partnership for Public Health, and Lakes Region HEAL. Neighborhood residents were involved from the planning stages through execution, providing valuable input during community forums and the action plan development process.

Wyatt Park Accomplishments

The HEAL grant was able to initiate a generous amount of unforeseen money for the Wyatt Park project to help complete the renovations and improve access to the park. Laconia’s City Council reallocated $50,000 toward additional park renovations. The Department of Public Works modified its original plans for street repair in the area and invested an additional $15,000+ to incorporate safety and accessibility improvements around the park, including moving a crosswalk to a safer location, rebuilding the sidewalk, installing adequate curbing and tip downs to allow easy access to the park, and doing a shim and overlay on the adjacent street.

Specific improvements to Wyatt Park included:

- Water bubbler/bottle filling station in the park
- Bike rack and picnic tables
- High visibility signs, new crosswalks, sidewalks with tip downs with detectable warning devices, and other pedestrian safety and accessibility measures
- New fencing and signage around the park
- Resurfaced basketball court painted for multiple uses including basketball, four square, hopscotch, and pickleball
- Lighting inside the park for safety
- Walking path installed around the park perimeter with extra green space
Wyatt Park had been falling into disrepair and was used by few community members because of safety issues. Its basketball court needed resurfacing, there was no lighting, traffic patterns made it dangerous to walk or bike to, and it had become a place where police would regularly respond to late night disturbances and vandalism.

The City of Laconia, led by its Parks & Recreation Department, applied for and received a HEAL community grant in 2012 to help revitalize Wyatt Park in the South End neighborhood of its city. The HEAL grant included approximately $10,000 in grant monies and over $80,000 of training and technical assistance over the two-year grant period. Laconia had selected Wyatt Park as a priority project because there were already several active community champions advocating for upgrading the park.

Renovation plans were developed in response to feedback from residents and business owners in the Wyatt Park-South End community. Safety and access to the park were some of the top concerns voiced by the community during several forums conducted by the city and HEAL NH over nine months. The city quickly realized they needed to bring in the Department of Public Works to address these issues. The DPW had just redone one street near Wyatt Park, and another was on the docket to be repaved. The timing was critical.

Armed with renovation plans for the park and backed by community support, Kevin Dunleavy and Amy Lovisek of the Laconia Parks & Recreation Department met with the Department of Public Works (DPW) to make their case for safer access to the park.

Amy and Kevin met with Laconia’s Public Works Director, Paul Moynihan, and Assistant Director, Luke Powell, near the park to show them the plans.

“The timing was perfect,” explains Amy. “Two families with strollers were trying to cross the street to get to Wyatt Park. We all watched while the mothers had to remove the children from the strollers, carry their children and drag the stollers behind them, all while trying to dodge traffic.”

While the DPW already had a budget to repair a street in that area, the project was made a priority and an additional $15,000+ was added to include extra safety and accessibility improvements including ADA-compliant tipdowns for the crosswalks.

According to Paul Moynihan, “We had recently done road upgrades on the street sections adjacent to Wyatt Park, but we hadn’t addressed accessibility improvements to the adjacent sidewalk. The HEAL Grant initiative prompted us to revisit the pedestrian and active transportation needs at this site and to broaden our view to accomplish similar improvements on other city roadway upgrade projects in the future.”

Support for the park did not stop at the DPW. When the City Council realized the support and momentum the park was receiving by the community, it allocated $50,000 for improvements to Wyatt Park.

“HeAL was a catalyst for the Wyatt Park project,” said Amy. “The grant helped us get more support and feedback from the community, paid for some of the improvements, but, more importantly, helped us leverage our relationships with the other departments in the City to really make this park a special place for families to get together and enjoy the outside and be active.”
“I have been working with our Division of Public Health and Community Services and others to start a community garden on the Rail Trail section that PAL had adopted. It’s near the community center. It’s a high-traffic area. I think it will answer a lot of the questions about security.”

Shaun Nelson, Executive Director
Nashua Police Athletic League (PAL)

Nashua HEAL’s Tree Streets Neighborhood Project Achievements

- Neighborhood residents and local nonprofit agencies created a community garden adjacent to the Heritage Rail Trail
- Nashua HEAL promoted use of the Heritage Rail Trail through creation of interest centers, maps, and additional improvements
Healthy People Healthy Places:
Addressing Obesity in New Hampshire

In 2008, New Hampshire’s first Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Action Plan was launched, followed by the release of the state’s second obesity prevention plan in 2014, the Healthy People Healthy Places Plan. These plans were developed through a collaborative effort of public- and private-sector partners to address the increasing overweight and obesity rates within the state’s population, particularly in highest need communities.

Since 2008, the HEAL Home at the Foundation for Healthy Communities has led implementation of the healthy eating active living strategies outlined in these plans with support from philanthropic and government organizations, partners across multiple sectors, including public health, land use and planning, transportation, education, health care, and food systems. The HEAL Community Grant Program (CGP), was established in 2009 to provide funding and technical support to promote healthier people and places at the local level. In 2009, four community coalitions received three-year grants of $150,000. In 2012, four more coalitions – Ashland, Berlin, Laconia, and Nashua – received two-year $10,000 grants. The HEAL Home provided communications, community assessment, and coalition building technical assistance. This case study highlights the Nashua HEAL coalition’s achievements and progress in Nashua’s Tree Streets Neighborhood.

Nashua HEAL’s Priorities and Partners

In 2010, The City of Nashua Division of Public Health and Community Services (DPHCS) conducted a Community Health Assessment, followed by the development of a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) which included obesity prevention as a priority area. A CHIP workgroup dedicated to fighting obesity in Nashua was created consisting of hospitals, health centers, schools, businesses, community service organizations, and other key stakeholders. The City of Nashua Community Development Division also initiated the Nashua Tree Streets Neighborhood Plan to help improve and revitalize open spaces for a healthy, active environment that promotes exercise and play for the underserved populations in this area of the city.

HEAL funding initiated a municipal project to improve the environment in the City’s Heritage Rail Trail in the Tree Streets Neighborhood. The Nashua HEAL coalition was led by the DPHCS and included the CHIP workgroup that was led by both DPHCS and the Nashua YMCA. Multi-sector partnerships throughout the process included the Police Athletic League (PAL), Marguerite’s Place Inc., Greater Nashua YMCA, Nashua Regional Planning Commission, NeighborWorks Southern NH, Southern NH Services, Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, United Way, Rivier University, Boys and Girls Club of Greater Nashua, Healthy at Home, Nashua Parks and Recreation Department, UNH Cooperative Extension, Home Health and Hospice, Nashua Pediatrics, St. Joseph Hospital, and Nashua School District.

Nashua HEAL Contact

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Nashua is New Hampshire’s second largest city with 86,933 residents.

Recent data has shown that two-thirds of the Nashua population is either overweight or obese, and 17.4% of 3rd grade students were obese. 9.3% of residents are below the poverty level, and the unemployment rate is at 6.2%.

These trends are more pronounced in certain areas of Nashua, including the Tree Streets Neighborhood. For example, poverty levels for households in the Tree Streets are about 3 times higher than in the City and approximately 80% of the 500+ students at the neighborhood’s Ledge Street Elementary School is eligible for free or reduced lunch.

This project focused on improved access to healthy food options and safe physical activity in the Tree Streets Neighborhood.

Source: Tree Streets Neighborhood Analysis and Overview, 2012

Nashua HEAL

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CASE STUDY: Tree Streets Project

Community Garden

**Goal:** Increase fruit and vegetable availability by establishing a community garden adjacent to the Heritage Rail Trail

- Utilized HEAL funds and community volunteers to build community garden
- Several community organizations “adopted” garden to help maintain and promote its use
- Garden became community hub for nonprofit programming and recreation for residents
- Provided education to residents on gardening

Heritage Rail Trail Improvements

**Goal:** Provide increased opportunities for physical activity through safety, security, and aesthetic improvements along the Heritage Rail Trail

- Organized community rail trail clean-up
- Installed lighting to make trails safer
- Positive Street Art painted colorful murals to improve aesthetics
- Provided signs and conducted an educational, promotional, and outreach campaign to increase awareness of the trail improvements and engage community members in ongoing project activities

Leveraging the HEAL Grant for Additional Funding and Resources

The HEAL project gained recognition across the city. Nashua was awarded $121,000 in additional funding over the two-year grant period, as well as several in-kind donations. Funds resulting from HEAL implementation are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2013</td>
<td>$3,500</td>
<td>Grant to support We Can! and CATCH pilot at Amherst Street Elementary School</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 2013</td>
<td>$8,500</td>
<td>NeighborWorks grant for 6 coalition members to attend Community Leadership Institute</td>
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<td>August 2013</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>PAL and the YMCA received $35,000 grant award from the Citizens Foundation Growing Communities Initiative</td>
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<td>December 2013</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>YMCA received a NH Charitable Foundation grant to provide administrative resources for the obesity workgroup</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2013</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>YMCA committed match funds to support the administrative resource funding received from NH Charitable Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2013</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>YMCA received a bike-pedestrian grant through an anonymous fund of the NH Charitable Foundation</td>
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<td>April 2014</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>YMCA received a second bike-pedestrian grant through an anonymous fund of the NH Charitable Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2014</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>HNH Foundation grant to support obesity workgroup coordinator staffing</td>
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HEAL Efforts Continue in Nashua

The success of the community garden and trail motivated others to contribute and inspired additional activities. The Nashua HEAL coalition implemented additional initiatives including We Can! and the CATCH curriculum pilot program at one elementary school and one early childhood center; WALK (Nashua) sign project; rail trail engineering study to connect the Heritage Rail Trail and Mine Falls Park; Tree Streets Neighborhood pride sticker campaign; and research for workplace wellness program options for small businesses. A Plan4Health Nashua Complete Streets project was launched in late 2014 supported by a $125,000 American Planning Association grant.
Heritage Rail Trail Improvements Bring Community Together While Providing Healthy Food and Physical Activity

The Heritage Rail Trail and community garden project started as a collaboration with the City of Nashua’s Division of Public Health and Community Service and HEAL NH to bring healthier food options and opportunities for safe physical activity to the Tree Streets Neighborhood of Nashua.

Residents and organizations in this neighborhood have embraced the project, volunteering with the trail clean-up efforts and the build-out of the community garden. A mural from Positive Street Art helped beautiful the area around the trail. Once considered unsafe and neglected, people are now on the trail more and growing fresh produce in the garden.

According to Shaun Nelson, Executive Director of Nashua Police Athletic League (PAL), a lead organization in the development of the community garden, “There seems to be more of a sense of community, residents are stopping and having conversations with their neighbors. And neighborhood kids and their families are using the garden and enjoying the Rail Trail more.”

After only a few months, the garden had 60 to 100 people using it regularly. In addition to residents, organizations are using it as part of their programming: PAL brings the kids to work on the garden; Marguerite’s Place early childcare center has four- and five-year-olds at the garden weekly as part of their programming; and the Plus Company, an organization that serves individuals with special needs, also uses the garden.

Other members of the community have contributed to the project’s success. Positive Street Art, painted a mural that helped beautify the trail and bring a sense of pride to the community.

“Positive Street Art’s mission is to use art to build stronger communities, so when we heard about this project we really wanted to collaborate,” said Ramirez. “As soon as I started on the mural, people would stop and want to talk about it. They were really interested and they said they thought it was really great for the community.”

Ramirez said that he now uses the Rail Trail all the time and sees other community members using it more too.

“I hope that the mural will inspire others to go out there in the community and get involved, use the trail and the garden and enjoy the neighborhood,” said Ramirez.