

WORKING TO ENSURE A

active  
living

HEALTHY COMMUNITY

# What does a healthy community look like?

A healthy community has places and opportunities that allow people of all ages and abilities to enjoy walking, bicycling, and other forms of recreation. It includes well-maintained sidewalks, trails, on-street bicycle lanes, open spaces, and parks. It encourages mixed-use development and destinations that are connected and easily accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists.

# Why is active living so important?

The United States is in the midst of an epidemic of physical inactivity, and Spartanburg is no exception. In fact, residents of Spartanburg County have some of the highest rates in the nation of obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, and certain cancers — all conditions related to physical inactivity. The need to address the issue of physical inactivity in our community is undeniable.



*Active living refers to a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines.* In addition to recreational exercise, active living includes moderate forms of physical activity such as walking or bicycling for transportation, taking the stairs, or working in the yard. Unfortunately, being physically active has become difficult for many people because of our dependence on the automobile, increased television use, and the way we design our communities and neighborhoods. To address these challenges, a community must create more activity-friendly environments, change policies to encourage physical activity, and educate and motivate its residents to be physically active.

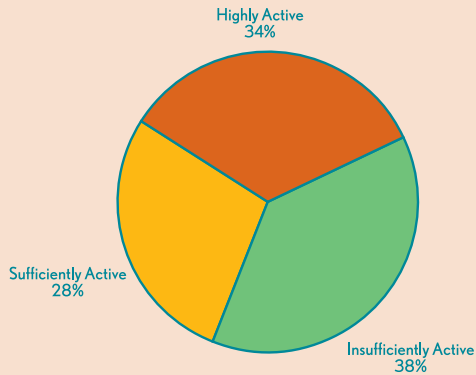
Because of the importance of active living, the Mary Black Foundation selected it as one of its two grantmaking priority areas. The Foundation believes that its investment in projects that increase opportunities for and support of physical activity will improve the health of our entire community.

As part of its investment in active living, the Foundation has contracted with Priority Metrics Group, a Spartanburg-based research company, to survey Spartanburg County residents about a variety of issues related to physical activity. The responses to the telephone survey will allow the Foundation to examine and track local data over time. By highlighting some of the initial data collected, this report shows six areas that need improvement. More importantly, the report offers ways that all of us can contribute to change. *Changing our physical environment, policies that influence physical activity, and, ultimately, our behavior will take time and a commitment on the part of our community, but the outcomes are essential to the health of Spartanburg County.*

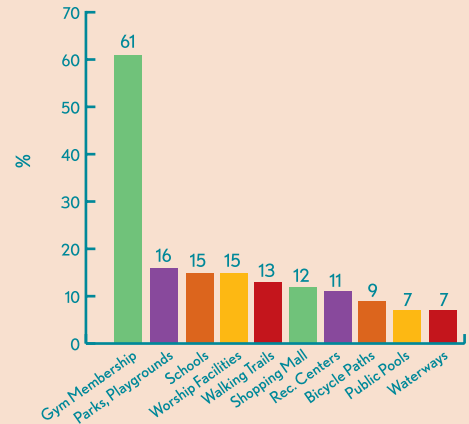
*Get out and be active.*

National research has shown that even relatively small increases in physical activity produce significant health benefits such as weight loss, lowered cholesterol and blood pressure, and improved mental health. It is not necessary to do vigorous activity to experience these health benefits. Unfortunately, many of us are leading sedentary lives. We, as individuals, need to commit to incorporate physical activity into our daily lives.

**Percentage of People Who Meet the Criteria for Sufficient Levels of Physical Activity**



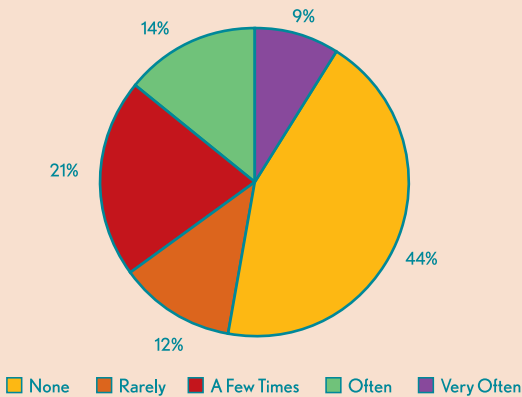
**Percentage of People Using Community Resources for Physical Activity in the Last Seven Days**



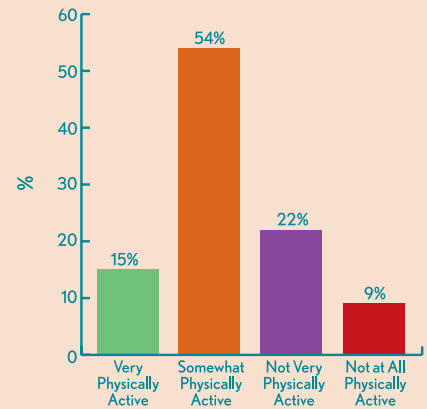
*Encourage those around you to lead active lifestyles.*

Social support is a key element in beginning and sustaining an active lifestyle. Unfortunately, many Spartanburg residents receive little, if any, encouragement or support for being physically active. One of the best forms of social support is to lead by example. As we become more and more active in our own lives, others close to us will be encouraged to follow suit.

**Percentage of People Who Had Friends or Family Who Exercised with Them**



**Percentage of People Who Feel People in Their Neighborhood are Physically Active**



*Participate in local programs to encourage employees to lead active lifestyles.*

In addition to having healthier and more productive employees, businesses that promote active lifestyles through the workplace have shown it to be a good investment. Research from several US companies has found that employees who participate in employer-sponsored physical activity programs have improved job performance and report higher job satisfaction than those not involved in the programs. Locally, there are a number of programs that can help an employer promote physical activity among its employees.

The Mary Black Foundation, Palmetto Conservation Foundation, and Partners for Active Living have partnered to offer weekly bicycle and walking programs.

Partners for Active Living has a pedometer-based workplace challenge.

The YMCA of Greater Spartanburg offers Shrinkdown to motivate people to lead healthier lives.

The Spartanburg Nutrition Council helps develop community gardens to promote physical activity and community building.

*Provide employees with tools that allow them to incorporate physical activity into the workday.*

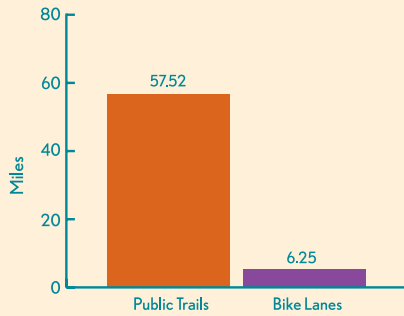
Because all of our lives are so busy, employers have a unique opportunity to help their employees integrate physical activity into their daily lives. Engaging in physical activity as part of one's daily life is more sustainable than trying to carve out a specific time for exercise. Employers can offer on-site exercise facilities, allow organized fitness classes in a meeting room, promote short breaks for stretching or walking, encourage use of the stairs, provide a flexible schedule to allow employees to exercise during lunch, provide lockers and showers, and install bicycle racks.



**Support land use planning that encourages activity-friendly communities.**

Spartanburg County is growing rapidly, and most of the growth is automobile-oriented, making our community unwelcoming and dangerous for pedestrians, cyclists, and those using other forms of active transportation. Continuing this pattern of development is likely to have negative implications for physical activity, health, quality of life, and, ultimately, economic competitiveness.

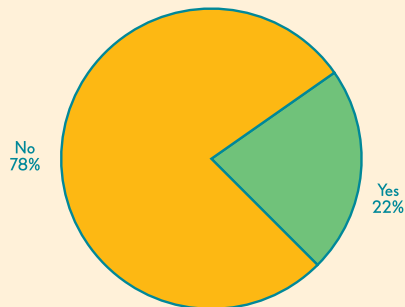
**Miles of Public Trails and Bike Lanes in Spartanburg County**



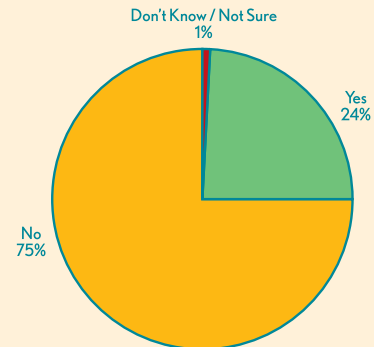
**Invest in infrastructure that facilitates and encourages active living.**

As our community grows, it is critical that policymakers pay attention to the infrastructure needed to support active living. Residents are beginning to demand that their communities be conducive to active living and include amenities that support active lifestyles. Active living amenities not only improve health, but trails, for example, have been shown to enhance property values, expand and attract local businesses, increase tax revenues, and create jobs.

**Percentage of People Who Say Their Neighborhood Has Sidewalks**



**Percentage of People Who Say Their Neighborhood Has Public Recreation Facilities such as Bike Paths, Walking Trails, Public Pools, Parks, or Recreation Centers**







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#### *Data Methodology*

Information about the miles of public trails and bike lanes was provided by the Spartanburg Area Transportation Study. All other data in this report was collected by Priority Metrics Group (Spartanburg, SC) for the Mary Black Foundation. Priority Metrics Group conducted a telephone survey of Spartanburg County residents 18 years of age or older. Approximately 200 surveys were completed each month from January – December 2005. Interviews were conducted during afternoon, evening, and weekend hours to reach individuals who might be working or otherwise unavailable during normal business hours. Average survey time was approximately 30 minutes. Survey results presented in this report are weighted using age and income of respondents. The sample size [n=2,403] results in a confidence interval of  $\pm 0.04$  ( $\alpha=0.05$ ,  $\sigma=1.0$ ) around an average response and  $\pm 1.8\%$  ( $\alpha=0.05$ , est. proportion=25%/75%) around a percentage response.

*Please contact the Mary Black Foundation for more information about this report or the data collection process.*

#### *Using this Report*

*Please acknowledge the Mary Black Foundation when using this report. Additional copies are available from the Mary Black Foundation.*