



BRAZOS COUNTY ACTIVE LIVING PLAN

FOR A HEALTHIER
BRAZOS COUNTY





Executive Summary

The Active Living Plan (ALP) is a working document designed to inform and support community leaders to take action and make changes that will increase physical activity in their communities. It is designed to support the goals of other health promotion and disease prevention plans by providing the information, resources, strategies, and tools that will help local health officials and other community leaders to set goals and implement plans that will make it easier for more people to become more physically active. The Brazos County ALP is a new project that has been created by the community for the community.

The active living plan includes recommendations from the following ten sectors: Business and Industry, Community Recreation, Fitness, and Parks; Education; Faith-Based Settings; Healthcare; Mass Media; Public Health; Sports; Transportation, Land Use, Community Design & Military.

The ALP is a comprehensive set of policies, programs, and initiatives designed to increase physical activity in all segments of the Brazos county population. The ALP aims to foster a culture that supports physically active lifestyles. Its ultimate purpose is to improve health, prevent disease and disability, and enhance quality of life.

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Introduction

Overview

Physical activity is critical to maintaining and improving many aspects of health. Regular physical activity can greatly reduce risks associated with sedentary behavior, such as chronic disease, obesity, and decrease of mobility. Although individual responsibility for improving one's health plays a significant role, a community plays an important role in supporting healthy lifestyles. As a community we must cultivate an environment that promotes healthy behaviors and strives to make decisions that prioritize health in our workplaces, schools, and homes.

The Brazos County Active Living Plan aims to increase the community's engagement in physical activity by fostering a culture that integrates active living as a part of everyday life. This physical activity plan follows the same order as the recommended intervention areas in the National Physical Activity Plan.

These 10 areas include:

1. Business and Industry
2. Community Recreation, Fitness and Parks
3. Education
4. Faith-Based Settings
5. Health Care
6. Mass Media
7. Military
8. Public Health
9. Sports
10. Transportation, Land Use, and Community

Each sector is aligned with satisfying unique needs of the Brazos County community in order to increase physical activity. These 10 sectors are responsible for affecting change by:

- Advocating for active living
- Helping with the development, implementation, and promotion of opportunities for active living
- Providing resources that support the expansion or continuation of the Active Living Plan

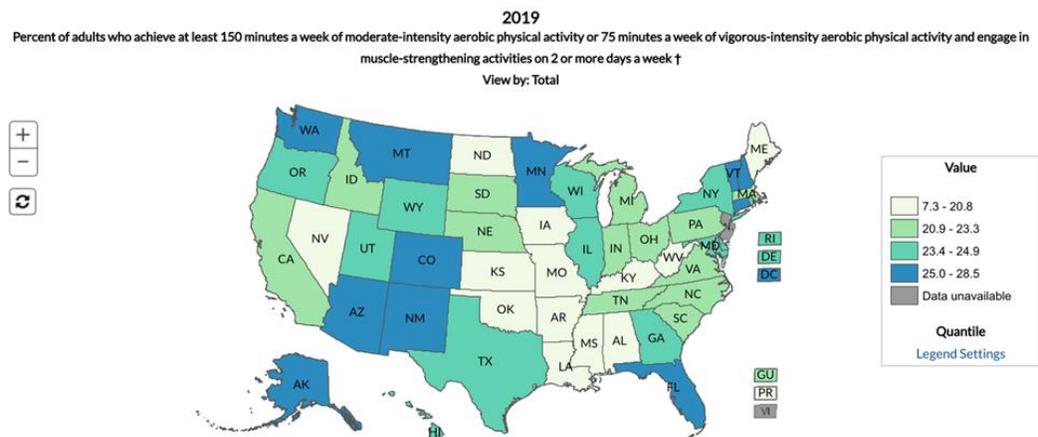
With support from the 10 sectors, the Brazos County Active Living Plan intends to increase physical activity among residents by providing policy, system, and environmental changes that offer safe and accessible opportunities for physical activity.

State, Local, and National Data

Although physical activity is tied to numerous health benefits, many Americans do not receive the recommended amount of physical activity. The benefits of physical activity encompass multiple dimensions of health, ranging from improved cognitive abilities to up-keeping a healthy bone density (CDC –why it matters). Sedentary behavior is often linked to chronic disease. In fact, about half of American adults – approximately 117 million people – have one or more preventable chronic diseases (U.S. Dept. of HHS). In Texas, 1 in 4 people are physically inactive, compared to 1 in 5 people in the U.S. In a study conducted by Texas A&M University’s Center for Community Health Development, 22.8% of adults reported no leisure-time physical activity in the past month for the greater Brazos Valley region, which is lower than the Healthy People 2020 target of less than 32.6% of the population reporting no leisure-time physical activity. (TAMU Center for Community Health Development). Despite the fact that 89.4% of the Brazos County population has access to exercise opportunities, 29% adults are obese and 19.5% are physically inactive (County Health Rankings, n.d.).

Eliminating disparities related to physical activity among low-income and racial/ethnic groups is a complex and challenging issue that requires multifaceted solutions (Dr. Wendell Taylor). Less than half of low-income adults reach recommended physical activity goals and lower socioeconomic status (SES) neighborhoods typically have fewer facilities that promote physical activity (CDC – housing assistance). Racial and ethnic minorities have high rates of obesity and other diseases related to sedentary behavior. Non-Hispanic black Americans had the highest prevalence of obesity (49.6%), followed by Hispanics (44.8%) (CDC – adult obesity facts).

Disparities in physical activity are also present between males and females. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, female adolescents’ physical activity tends to decrease dramatically compared to their male counterparts and this disparity persists into adulthood. The percentage of high school girls who met the aerobic physical activity and muscle-strengthening guidelines was lower than the high school boys. (USDHHS)



(CDC – DNPAO data)

As the map indicates, Texas compares unfavorably with regards to physical activity nationwide.

Texas failed to satisfy health people 2010 objective 22-1: no leisure time physical activity among adults (aged 18+). The target for this objective was 20%. Texas, among many other southern states, ranked the lowest with 28.1-32.4% of adults engaging in no leisure time physical activity (CDC).

Social Ecological Model of Behavior Change

This data indicates a clear need for physical activity interventions, from policies to communities to individuals. Because physical activity does rely on both external, environmental factors as well as internal influences, we use the Social Ecological Model for Behavior Change to describe the process necessary to facilitate physical activity in Brazos County.

Individual

Physical inactivity can be addressed by change in individual behavior. Behavior change stems from modifications in knowledge, attitude, skills, and beliefs. Individual factors include age, economic stability, employment status, and health literacy. Influence from social networks often contribute to increasing engagement in healthy behaviors, such as physical activity.

Interpersonal

Families, partners, friends, peers and coworkers represent potential sources of interpersonal influence. By providing support and guidance, formal and informal social networks can encourage and maintain individual lifestyle changes.

Organizations

Schools, workplaces, and other social institutions all have the capacity to help or hinder active living. By making policy changes and promoting healthy behaviors, these organizations can create settings that promote individuals to take part in physical activity every day.

Communities

The community involves relationships among residents, groups, and organizations that have the option to collaborate on implementing changes that encourage physical activity. The availability of community-based resources and opportunities for recreational and leisure-time activities play a significant role in supporting active living (Community Preventative Task Force). Communities influence health behaviors through numerous factors, such as access to safe and appealing places to be active, social norms, crime and violence, walkability, as well civic participation.

Society/Public Policy

Society reflects how all other components work together to create change. Local, state, and national policies can establish an environment that maintains resources and practices that support active living.

The following sections contain interventions which will try to encourage physical activity on all levels; the responsibility of being physically active falls as much on society and the environment as it does on the individual. This ALP strives to show how each societal component of Brazos County can work towards a more active population.

(Cottrell et al., 2018)

MISSION

Create opportunities to foster and promote active engagement of community members towards enhanced health and wellness.



Vision

To have a community whose members value and actively pursue healthy lifestyle in order to enjoy their most fulfilling lives through enhanced health and wellness.

The Active Living Plan

An active living plan (ALP) is a working document designed to inform and support community leaders to take action and make changes that will increase physical activity in their communities. It is designed to support the goals of other health promotion and disease prevention plans by providing the information, resources, strategies, and tools that will help local health officials and other community leaders to set goals and implement plans that will make it easier for more people to become more physically active. The active living plan must include recommendations from the following ten sectors: Business and Industry; Community, Recreation, Fitness, and Parks; Education; Faith-Based Settings; Healthcare; Mass Media; Public Health; Sports; Transportation, Land Use; Community Design & Military



Sector Summaries

Each sector presents strategies aimed at promoting physical activity. Each strategy also outlines specific tactics that communities, organizations and agencies, and individuals can use to address the strategy. Recognizing that some strategies encompass multiple sectors, the ALP also has several overarching priorities.

The ALP is comprised of recommendations that are organized in ten major categories or societal sectors and summarized as follows:

Business & Industry

Businesses across the Brazos County excel and thrive year after year. More employers are encouraging employees to have some kind of access to self-care, not only physical but mental as well. Many employers give the opportunity to offer wellness programs. Today, wellness programs are common among both medium and small-sized businesses. Wellness programs give employees incentives, tools, social support, privacy, and strategies to adopt and maintain healthy behaviors. Traditional well-being programs are designed to help employees adopt and maintain healthy behaviors.

Community, Recreation, Fitness and Parks

Public park and recreation agencies create healthy communities and play a fundamental role in enhancing the physical environments in which we live. Through facilities, outdoor settings, and services provided, they support good health for people of all abilities, ages, socio-economic backgrounds, and ethnicities. They foster change through collaborative programs and policies that reach a vast population to help reduce obesity and incidence of chronic disease by providing opportunities to increase rigorous physical activity in a variety of forms.

Education

School wellness programs can prevent chronic diseases and help maintain a healthier way to help teachers and students maintain daily. To do this, school employees and students need regular physical activity and a healthy diet. These healthy behaviors should be the core of most wellness programs. Proper education points out where changes are needed and where the student and staff need to take personal action to improve their health.

Faith-Based

Faith-based organizations play an important role in the spiritual and physical health of their congregation and can make a difference by empowering people of faith to be passionate and effective leaders for creating healthier communities. Faith-based programs can improve health outcomes. The emphasis of this sector is to help faith-based organizations reach faith communities and the broader community with successful wellness interventions. This might mean working with and through religious institutions.

Health Care

Health care is a valued and critical component to quality of life in the Brazos County. This area has a large selection of individuals, businesses, and resources available to those looking to enhance their health and wellness. Utilization of health care is a critical component to improving each community member's health and wellness, but also incorporating opportunities for daily physical engagement must be added. We are no longer simply diagnosing and treating, but preventing health disparities by offering engaging opportunities for community members to actively participate and even take charge of their health and wellness.

Mass Media

The mass media, by communicating with people in large numbers, can have a huge impact on the public's knowledge, beliefs, perceptions, attitudes and behaviors, not only as individuals but also as families, community and wider society. The power and reach of the mass media can influence all aspects of people's lives, including health and well-being, and can be harnessed to promote health by informing, motivating and empowering people to change behavior and by providing a platform for advocating healthier policies.

Military

Health scientist, Dr. Dan Bornstein has been working diligently on adding the military sector to the National Physical Activity Plan. He has a number of other initiatives underway, including a new online graduate certificate program in tactical performance and resiliency.

Military personnel are generally more physically active than civilians; however, the transition to life as a veteran is characterized by a steep drop in physical activity, and a sharp rise in obesity and related health conditions. Physical activity promotion among veterans, particularly those with physical limitations and/or mental health conditions, represents an opportunity to promote holistic well-being.

Public Health

The role of local public health sector is to educate, promote, maintain and engage with the community, along with other governmental entities. Ongoing communication between the health department and the community is essential to foster trust and to ensure that those in the lead have the necessary information to craft viable solutions for everyone. Promoting healthy communities and healthy behaviors means activities that improve health in a population, such as investing in healthy families; engaging communities to change policy, systems or environments to promote positive health or prevent adverse health; providing information and education about healthy communities or population health status; and addressing issues of health equity, health disparities, and the social determinants of health.

Sports

Sporting events make an incredible impact on a community. Sport events are offered throughout the community, such as 5k runs, woman's volleyball, softball and even weight lifting competitions as well as men's sports. Brazos County offers sporting events year round, but college football is a great way to bring the community together.

By participating in a variety of sports, the community has the opportunity to explore many different types of movement and develop a wide array of physical skills. Sports have a way of impacting a community, a way of setting a tone, and a way of financially and socially impacting a community, and that impact can be measured in many, many ways.

Transportation, Land Use and Community Design

The Transportation, Land Use, and Community Design sector encompasses local organizations, agencies, boards, and governing bodies that address transportation, development patterns, built environment, public spaces, public works, and community design and planning issues. This sector has the power to increase opportunities for walking and improve the pedestrian experience by designing and maintaining communities and streets to make them safe and accessible for people of all ages and abilities. The transportation, land use, and community design sector can also promote walking and walkable communities through planning, land use, development, zoning policies and plans that support walking for all families.

Sector Strategies, Tactics, and Outcome Measures

This section presents each of the ten sectors identifying strategies, tactics, and measures by which to evaluate outcomes.

Business & Industry

Strategy #1

Create employee health and wellness programs to promote a healthy living style.

How will we do this?

Objective #1

Encourage businesses to promote physical activity amongst employees by providing incentives and encouraging active behaviors at work.

Goals:

- Create, distribute, and record which businesses use signage to encourage able-bodied employees to take stairs instead of the elevator
- Log how many businesses offer incentives such as extended lunch breaks in order to engage in a physical activity before or after taking lunch
- How many employees take advantage of the business' time for physical activity

Strategy #2

Motivate and encourage local employers to give employees incentives by providing physical activity programs during business hours.

How will we do this?

Objective #1

Encourage employers to create a physical activity during hours such as teams within all departments for a friendly competition.

Goals:

- Divide departments by teams to have a friendly competition of walking the most on a monthly basis
- Give monthly incentives such as free time, office party, gift cards or a movie during office hours



Community, Recreation, Fitness and Parks

Strategy #1

Promote programs currently operating at the Bryan & College Station parks & recreation centers and other community events that offer activities for all ages.

How will we do this?

Objective 1:

Adopt and implement strategies that increase the public's knowledge of parks', recreation centers', and fitness/sports facilities' events that promote physical activity.

Goals:

- Increase the general public's knowledge of physical activities in Brazos County.
- Increase attendance at physical activity events hosted by Bryan & College Station parks & recreation departments and other community centers



Strategy # 2

Provide access to places for active recreation, such as playgrounds, hiking and biking trails, basketball courts, sports fields, and swimming pools in Brazos County.

How will we do this?

Objective #1:

Integrating public spaces throughout the community over time with sidewalks or other connections enhancing transitional areas by creating public spaces within the built environment.

Goals:

- Increase the usage of current facilities
- Provide services to residents regardless of income, background, and ability
- Continue to expand the level of public information and involvement in parks and recreation

Potential Partners:

- Lincoln Recreation Center
- City of Bryan Parks & Recreation
- College Station Parks & Recreation
- Texas A&M University



Education

Strategy #1

Create opportunities for physical activities before, during and after school. Programs in which children are engaged in physical activities to enhance focus and prevent chronic disease or other health problems.

How will we do this?

Objective#1

Support efforts of safe walking routes to and from school in order to increase active transportation.

Goals:

Have all schools in both districts participate in International walk/bike to school day (<http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/>) & provide accommodations for children with disabilities



Faith-based

Strategy #1

New Victory Temple provides a community garden, to help encourage healthy eating and physical activity in their local neighborhood. This provides easy accessible fresh produce for those nearby and educates the community on ways to prevent diabetes and other diet related diseases prevalent in our area.

How will we do this?

Objective #1

Connect with and establish relationships with community organizations, city staff, leaders of other faith-based groups to build awareness of the community garden project that supplies fresh veggies to seniors by having adults and youth do the planning, developing, and preparing the ground for growing veggies as part of the Active Living Plan.

Goals

- Offer education regarding the Active Living Plan, through a community garden and how community gardens can promote healthy eating and physical exercise.
- Include information on faith-based group's websites, weekly emails, and provide healthy and physical exercise information at their meetings and trainings.
- Extend invitations to members of faith groups or those who rely on faith-based organizations to help in this community garden, and develop other community gardens as part of physical activity events, as well as improve healthy eating for seniors.



Strategy# 2:

Create an atmosphere of community garden collaboration and nutritional eating and physical exercise where faith-based groups can encourage each other to improve the overall health of faith-based organizations.

How will we do this?

Objective:

Collaborate with other faith-based organizations to encourage the community to participate

Goals:

- Have all church members participate and promote community garden
- Make some healthy recipe demonstrations with the vegetables they grow

Potential Partners

- United Methodist Church
- First Baptist Church
- Baptist Church
- AgriLife Extension Service



Health Care

Strategy 1:

Healthcare systems should increase the priority of physical activity assessment, advice, and promotion.

How will we do this?

Objective #1

Create flyers for clinics to hand out to patients promoting the campaigns, and local companies' healthy living websites that feature tips and resources

Goals:

- Create QR code with links to website
- Track by checking in monthly with medical offices to see if they've been handing out the flyers
- HFA app
 - a. Centralized website for sharing info and resources
 - b. "Brazos County Active Living Healthcare website" links from BSW and CHI
 - c. Track website traffic
 - d. Youth resources link: free activities, and ideas
 - e. Help develop good habits as a kid and practical ways to implement them

Strategy #2:

Healthcare systems and professional societies should establish the spectrum of physical inactivity to insufficient physical activity as a treatable and preventable condition with profound health and cost implications.

How will we do this?

Objective #2

Work with community medical colleagues and create a survey and collect information about health disparities in Brazos County.

Goals:

- Collect data that shows benefits of physical activity on health and cost of healthcare
- Collaborate with Dr. Mark Faries, Behavioral & Lifestyle Medicine; Theology in Health
- Research utilizing search engines such as Google Scholar and PubMed



Strategy 3:

Healthcare systems should partner with other sectors to promote access to evidence-based physical activity-related services and to reduce health disparities.

How will we do this?

Objective #3

A health committee can meet to discuss health disparities and create ways to decrease these issues.

Goals:

- Central way to share info and resources
- Links to blogs, organizations, and other resources
(Connected to Strategy 1, component 2)

Strategy 4:

Create a standard for local companies to implement a website page that promotes, educates, and encourages community members towards enhanced Health and Wellness.

How will we do this and what will progress look like?

Meet with larger company presence in our area to promote their website for this purpose, helping them define elements to their “health and wellness” page, which should include:

- Definition of “active living”
- Practical daily tips for increased health and wellness
- Local resources available related to active living
- Track the number of users that access the new information, and most common links
- Scheduling regular follow-up with these companies for feedback, changes, etc.

Strategy 5:

Actively campaign to pull in health care and other professionals to promote active living and lifestyle with the community members they serve.

How will we do this and what will progress look like?

Set up educational meetings with post-acute and specialty clinics regarding the Active Living Coalition’s goals, and resources available in our community that assists patients in engaging in healthy, active, lifestyles. -EX: Walking on Wednesday at Health For All, Walk With A Doc at BSW Medical Center

Goals

- Create a special event promoting lifestyle engagement through local health care systems to highlight resources and services that assist community members in active lifestyle engagement.

Potential partners:

- Baylor Scott & White Health For All
- CHI St. Joseph System Local Media, Radio, TV stations, The Eagle

Mass Media

Strategy #1

Encourage partnerships across the Brazos County sectors and encourage one another to continue promoting wellness and physical activity for the community.

How will we do this?

Objective #1

Utilizing mass media to promote physical activity campaigns such as social support programs, individual education, health fairs and physical activity events.

Goals

- Use high-frequency television and radio advertising to promote physical activities like walking with families & pets, biking, hiking, jogging as well as activities for those with special needs.
- Broadcasting public service announcements, and providing a weekly newspaper column along with other printed materials to encourage more physical activity.

Potential Partners

- KAGS
- KBTX
- Bryan broadcasting
- La Voz Hispana
- The Eagle



Military

Strategy #1

Create a walking group for military-connected individuals that meets regularly and includes speakers from around the community that will speak about topics of interest to the population during the walk.

How will we do this?

Objective #1

Provide and support military members and their families with wellness education that eventually will lead to better treatments and preventive measures for many diseases, including common illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

Goals

- Set up planning meeting for organizations interested in participating
- Create a calendar with featured topics listed for each walk/date
- Create Flyers (paper and digital versions) for military-connected organizations to hand out or email to clients promoting the walking group



Strategy #2

Physical Activity and public health organizations should partner with military-connected organizations in developing and delivering physical activity programs that are accessible to and tailored for diverse members of the population

How will we do this?

Objective #1

Provide the community with information on physical activity programs currently in place as well as promoting College Station Veterans Park and the current activities they currently offer.

Goals:

- Baseball, Football, Lacrosse, Rugby, Soccer, Softball, Ultimate Frisbee
- Marathons and 10k runs

Public Health

Strategy #1

Improve the walking trails in Downtown Bryan to promote physical activity and connect people to everyday destinations by encouraging community members to walk to their favorite restaurants and shops in Downtown Bryan.

How will we do this? How will it work?

Objective #1

Meet with the downtown association and the City of Bryan planners to re-design the trails.

Goals:

- Improve walking trails in downtown Bryan to promote physical activity
- Create updated trail signs to indicate mileage markers
- Create walking trail maps to distribute at downtown Bryan businesses
- Host kick-off event to launch improved walking trails



Strategy #2

Local public health professionals can promote efforts to increase physical activity within the built environment and increase livability, quality of life, and environmental sustainability by establishing, promoting, and participating in workgroups focused on the built environment and health.

How will we do this?

Objective #1

Increase the capacity of Brazos county residents to improve their health, promoting efforts through the adoption of technology systems, and programmatic efforts.

Goals:

- Identify other partners interested in promoting walkable and bike-able locations
- A physical activity cell phone application, with a map, will be designed to help residents identify the walking points, mileage walked and events throughout Bryan & College Station, scheduled for all ages

Potential Partners

- City of Bryan
- City of College Station
- Suddenlink Communications
- AT&T
- Texas A&M University



Sports

Strategy #1

Provide current programs in parks, recreation, and sports that are appropriate for individuals of all ages, all genders, special abilities and developmental stages that have demonstrated positive physical activity outcomes.

How will we do this?

Objective #1

To provide an athletic environment that enhances physical, mental, psychological, and social growth and development by encouraging all participants to practice and compete in a friendly and good sportsmanship.

Goals:

- Develop comprehensive community fitness challenges with local parks or other facility/organization focusing on weight loss, walking, and/or fitness.
- Create partnerships with trainers and fitness instructors to provide programs in all BCS parks and recreation centers.

Potential partners:

- Trufit Gym
- Gold's Gym
- City of Bryan Parks & Recreation
- City of College Station Parks & Recreation
- Texas A&M University



Transportation, Land Use, and Community Design

Strategy #1

Successful community planning balances the health, safety, and welfare of citizens while maintaining active community engagement, incentivizing development opportunities, and providing sustainability. Prioritizing the maintenance and expansion of adopted plans (i.e. comprehensive plans, area plans, master plans, etc.) along with educating and involving the community in plan update processes with a focus on active living guiding principles can result in long-term strategies for creating healthier buildings, streets, and urban spaces.

How will we do this?

Objective #1

During the creation or update of community plans, incorporate conversations about urban design strategies for creating neighborhoods, streets and outdoor spaces that encourage walking, bicycling, and active transportation and recreation.

Goals:

- Propose regulations that incentivize flexible development options with the goal of creating more pedestrian-friendly environments and other urban design strategies.
- Propose the creation of zoning districts that are truly mixed-use with development opportunities for residential and retail uses, and that include requirements for open space/conservation areas, pedestrian connectivity, and multi-story buildings.
- Continue to educate the public about adopted community plans, and involve all sectors of the community when the time comes to update these plans.

Potential Partner Agencies:

- City of Bryan
- City of College Station
- Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
- Brazos Transit District
- Brazos County Health District
- Texas A&M University Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning



Strategy #2

Transportation planners should work with human resource managers to create productivity policies to promote active modes of commuting. Creating a supportive environment that prioritizes health and wellness and advocates for alternative transportation methods can help businesses reduce employee turnover and improve productivity.

How will we do this?

Objective #1

Talent acquisition managers, benefits specialists, and other HR professionals should create benefits packages that incorporate commuter benefits programs, such as competitive bike challenges or earn-a-bike programs, to encourage, reward or require employees to do more walking, bicycling, or skating.

Goals:

- Because long commutes are unproductive and may lead to less physical activity and decreased cardiovascular health, propose the implementation of shift work, telecommuting, and flexible scheduling to limit congestion and reduce commute time.
- Press for the addition of bike racks on public buses as well as bike racks at all major employer sites and the busiest bus routes to provide convenience to employees who rely on a bicycle to complete their commute.

Potential Partner Agencies

- Brazos Valley - Affiliate of the Society for Human Resource Management
- Brazos Transit District
- Bike Barn
- Aggieland Cycling
- Rooster's Bike & Coffee Shop

Conclusion

The Active Living Plan provides cross-sector strategies and tactics to ensure access to safe, healthy places and programs to support physical activity and active living, ultimately decreasing premature illness and death and improving quality of life. This plan helps leaders to incorporate health considerations into decision-making and enhances collaboration and use of best practices to meet activity-related goals for the Brazos County.

ACTIVE LIVING TEAM MEMBERS 2021

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