

Access to Places for Physical Activity



PREVENTION RESEARCH CENTER
Prevention & Population Sciences

hsc.unm.edu/som/prc



www.stepintocuba.org

Community Campaign

Access to Places

Individually Adapted

Street Scale Design

Social Support

National recommendations call for regular physical activity (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2008). The Guide to Community Preventive Services (Community Preventive Services Task Force) recommends successful community strategies to increase physical activity. Cuba, New Mexico, has applied many of these strategies. The Step Into Cuba program, a nationally recognized model, is under study by the University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center (PRC). This fact sheet, one of a series of five, shares initial findings for New Mexico community use.

Recommendation from the Community Guide : Create or enhance access to places for physical activity and provide informational outreach for them.

Creation of, or enhancing access to places for physical activity involves the efforts of worksites, coalitions, agencies, and communities as they attempt to change the local environment to create opportunities for physical activity. Such changes include creating walking trails, building exercise facilities, or providing access to existing nearby facilities.

Evidence: Results from a Systematic Review by the Task Force

Research demonstrates that modifying the living and working environment by creating or enhancing access to places where people can be physically active, along with providing related informational outreach activities, is an effective strategy to help people incorporate physical activity into their daily lives. This strategy benefits entire populations by targeting physical structure in the community. People who regularly use these places have improved conditioning, increased calorie expenditure, more leisure-time physical activity, greater weight loss or maintenance, and decreased body fat.

Cuba Strategy

As Cuba, NM, is a rural and resource-poor community, three central strategies were chosen:

- enhancing existing locations with new trails – village park, schools, clinic, library, fairgrounds – that are safer and more attractive for walking
- planning pedestrian enhancements for village highways and streets
- planning and constructing wilderness trails close to town

Specific Cuba Approaches

❖ “Re-leafing” and Using the Village Park as the Walking Hub

Cuba’s St. Francis of Assisi Park provided a large scenic space with little vegetation and no place to walk until the inception of Step Into Cuba. The Alliance quickly identified the park as a centrally located hub for trail and walkway development. The partnership has completed a new nature trail that has required extensive enhancement (boulders, trees, shrubs, flowers, sand pile, kiosk, benches) to create a more attractive place to walk. Many volunteer hours have gone into this effort.



More Information

stepintocuba.org

hsc.unm.edu/som/prc/

thecommunityguide.org

❖ **Developing a Trail Plan and Guides for Walking Places**

A trail plan showing places to be developed for walking and proposed new trails in and around Cuba has been created and revised as needed. A guide featuring 9 places for walking, walking preparation and walking safety will be completed shortly.

❖ **Connecting to the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail**

The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDT) has a 12 mile gap on either side of the Village of Cuba. Step Into Cuba – since its inception – has promoted a new segment of trail that will better connect to the community for health, recreation and economic development. Four years of planning and advocacy by Step Into Cuba and its land management and other partners has contributed to the 2012 announcement of a proposed route that will bring the CDT to within 1 mile of the county fairgrounds and provide new opportunities for hiking and horseback riding. A health impact assessment of the proposed route is planned by the University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center as the proposed segment and alternatives undergo environmental and cultural clearance (National Environmental Policy Act). Kiosks promoting the CDT have been strategically placed at the US Post Office, Public Health and Nacimiento Community Foundation (the Foundation) office and village park.

❖ **Creating Open Space Trails**

Creation of the Fisher Community Trail and the Rito San Jose Trail is a signature accomplishment of Step Into Cuba. Land donated to the Foundation connects the village to the nearest corner of the Santa Fe National Forest. The Fisher Trail was constructed by volunteers trained by the National Park Service, while the Rito San Jose Trail was created by volunteers in conjunction with a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) clean-up of the canyon. Sandoval County will soon construct a road turnaround and trailhead parking area.

❖ **Creating Joint Use Trails with the Public Schools**

The Cuba high, middle and elementary schools are located on scenic property owned by the school district and bordered by a small piece of BLM land. Cross-country trail loops were created by the coach for practice and meets. These trails are in the process of being improved and marked for community use. A walking guide and map were created for use by school students, staff and nearby community residents.

❖ **Working with Transportation Planners to Enhance Sidewalks**

The Step Into Cuba Alliance worked with UNM PRC consultants, the Mid Region Council of Governments transportation planner, the Village of Cuba, and the NM Department of Transportation to design a phased US 550 sidewalk renovation and propose new pedestrian walkways. The first phase was completed in the fall of 2011 and has already become a walking destination for people who work and live nearby. More about pedestrian planning is covered in Fact Sheet #4, Street Scale Design.

❖ **Creating Short Trails Near Worksites and Homes**

Convenient places for people to walk near home or work were difficult to find before initiation of Step Into Cuba. Short trails were planned and constructed next to the Cuba Health Clinic and Cuba Baptist Church (on clinic property) and adjacent to the Cuba library, village office, senior center, and low income housing development (on village property). Trails are signed, and maintenance is a cooperative effort between the village and clinic volunteers. An extensive clean-up of the Rito Leche, adjacent to the clinic trail was organized in 2012 by the BLM and Step Into Cuba.