



Active Living Approaches by Local Government

Executive Summary

The trend toward an increasingly sedentary society costs local governments in numerous ways, and they have a vested interest in addressing it. Active living—or the integration of physical activity into daily routines—is one innovative approach to making communities healthier. In the Spring of 2004, the National Association of Counties (NACo) Center for Sustainable Communities and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) jointly designed a survey to understand how local government leaders view their role in enabling active living in communities.¹ The goal was to understand leaders' level of awareness about active living, their barriers to making communities more activity friendly, and their greatest needs.

The two organizations surveyed different audiences within their membership. ICMA distributed a paper version of the survey to Chief Administrative Officers in municipalities (cities, towns, townships, villages, etc.) with populations 10,000 and over. Out of 3,246 municipal representatives surveyed, 959 responded, for a response rate of 29.5%. NACo also mailed or faxed the survey to elected county officials (795) and publicized the web version of the survey. Survey responses were received from more than 100 counties and the overall response rate was 15.8%. Participants represented a cross-section of geographic regions, and community populations from metro to suburban and rural areas. As the findings demonstrate below, there are remarkable similarities between the two local government audiences surveyed.

The survey was produced with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Managed at San Diego State University, the Active Living Leadership initiative is a partnership effort of ICMA and NACo, along with Local Government Commission, National Conference of State Legislatures, National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, and the United States Conference of Mayors.²

¹ The goal of active living is to accumulate at least 30 minutes of activity each day in a variety of ways, such as walking or bicycling for transportation; exercise or pleasure; playing in the park; working in the yard; taking the stairs; and using recreational facilities. Local governments can promote such behavior in the community by providing environments that encourage daily active living choices.

² More information about active living and the Active Living Leadership initiative is available at <http://www.activelivingleadership>

Key Findings

Local governments are clearly concerned about the threat posed by America's rising levels of obesity and inactivity, and are committed to taking strong action to address them. More specifically:

- Local government leaders believe that community design impacts people's ability to be active.
- Local leaders consider it an important public duty to provide opportunities for physical activity in their communities.
- Most communities are already pursuing some initiatives linking biking, walking, health, and community design.
- Local government leadership, citizen support, and partnership with schools are the most important factors in achieving active living communities.
- Local leaders named Parks and Recreation, Planning, and Health Departments as most likely to be tasked with taking the lead in local active living strategies.
- The top two barriers to active living communities were limited staff and resources and the existing built environment, which makes driving a necessity.
- The most helpful tools to enable local leaders to assert leadership in active living are sample policies/programs and best practices or case studies.
- Responses varied little across jurisdiction size, geographic area, or audience (county elected vs. municipal appointed leaders).

Recommendations to Local Governments

1. Recognize the importance of local government leadership.
2. Inform citizens about active living and encourage them to expect success.
3. Question traditional assumptions about roles.
4. Partner with schools.
5. Communicate needs and barriers to decision makers at other levels of government.
6. Look for opportunities to retrofit existing buildings and routes to allow for more physical activity options.
7. Address land use regulations that inadvertently prohibit active community environments.
8. Take advantage of existing resources such as sample policies, programs, and case studies.



Active Living Approaches by Local Government

Introduction

Obesity is among the leading preventable causes of health-related problems in America, costing our nation an estimated \$117 billion per year³. A sedentary lifestyle has been shown to be one of the primary causes of obesity and related chronic diseases. This costs local governments in numerous ways, such as lowering community quality of life and productivity, and raising the cost of providing health care. Local governments therefore have a vested interest in addressing this challenge. Local governments also have real opportunities for improving the health environment, as they provide public health services and have land use decision-making power that directly impacts residents' ability to be physically active on a regular basis.

Local governments are concerned about the threat posed by America's rising levels of obesity and inactivity, and are committed to taking strong action to address them, according to a recent survey conducted by the National Association of Counties' (NACo) Center for Sustainable Communities, and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). And many local governments are adopting strategies to make their communities more conducive to "active living".

Active living is the integration of physical activity into daily routines. To enhance individual health, the goal is to accumulate at least 30 minutes of activity each day in a variety of ways, such as walking or bicycling for transportation; exercise or pleasure; playing in the park; working in the yard; taking the stairs; and using recreational facilities. Local governments can promote such behavior through providing environments that encourage daily active living choices.

³ Source: CDC Improving Nutrition and Increasing Physical Activity fact sheet:

http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/bb_nutrition/

A Primer on Active Living for Government Officials

http://www.leadershipforactiveliving.org/pdf_file/ALL_primer_final.pdf

ICMA and NACo's joint survey of local leaders was an attempt to understand just how local governments perceive the challenges of obesity and physical activity and what they believe should be done to address these challenges. ICMA queried *chief administrative officers in municipalities*, and NACo queried *county elected officials*. Participants included more than a thousand local government officials representing a cross-section of geographic regions, and community populations from metro to suburban and rural areas.

The responses of these two audiences provide valuable observations about local government practice in the active living arena across a range of localities. Information was gathered about: opportunities for physical activity, knowledge about community design, key factors to achieving active living communities, responsibility of departments to promote active living communities, current and potential active living initiatives, and the extent of local government involvement. In particular, as the following key findings demonstrate, there are remarkable similarities between the two local government audiences surveyed.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded the survey through the Active Living Leadership (ALL) initiative, which works with government leaders to create and promote active communities⁴. Partners in the ALL initiative include ICMA, NACo, the Local Government Commission, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, and the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The ALL initiative is managed at San Diego State University.

Key Findings

The local government leaders who were surveyed indicated that:

- Local government leaders believe that community design impacts people's ability to be active.
- Local leaders consider it an important public duty to provide opportunities for physical activity in their communities.
- Most communities are already pursuing some initiatives linking biking, walking, health, and community design.
- Local government leadership, citizen support, and partnership with schools are the most important factors in achieving active living communities.
- Local leaders named Parks and Recreation, Planning, and Health Departments as most likely to be tasked with taking the lead in local active living strategies.
- The top two barriers to active living communities were limited staff and resources and the existing built environment, which makes driving a necessity.
- The most helpful tools to enable local leaders to assert leadership in active living are sample policies/programs and best practices or case studies.
- Responses varied little across jurisdiction size, geographic area, or audience (county elected vs. municipal appointed leaders).

⁴ For more information about Active Living Leadership, visit www.activelivingleadership.org.

Recommendations to Local Governments

1. Recognize the importance of local government leadership.
2. Inform citizens about active living and encourage them to expect success.
3. Question traditional assumptions about roles.
4. Partner with schools.
5. Communicate needs and barriers to decision makers at other levels of government.
6. Look for opportunities to retrofit existing buildings and routes to allow for more physical activity options.
7. Address land use regulations that inadvertently prohibit active community environments.
8. Take advantage of existing resources such as sample policies, programs, and case studies.

Methods

The purpose of this survey was to better understand local government leaders' views of active living in three ways: awareness, current practices, and needs for the future. ICMA and NACo jointly designed the survey for local government officials as a useful base to compile responses across a range of local governments, in various types of jurisdictions, and between elected and appointed officials. Beginning in February 2004, ICMA distributed a paper version of the survey to Chief Administrative Officers in municipalities (cities, towns, townships, villages, etc.) with populations 10,000 and over. Out of 3,246 municipal representatives surveyed, 959 responded, for a response rate of 29.5%. NACo also mailed or faxed the survey to elected county officials (795) and publicized the web version of the survey. Survey responses were received from more than 100 counties and the overall response rate was 15.8%.

Detailed Findings

According to the survey results, local government officials consistently recognize that communities should be conducive to physical activity (Fig 1). They indicate that local governments enable opportunities for physical activity (Fig 2). Local government leaders also recognize that community design impacts residents' ability to be physically active. (Fig. 3).

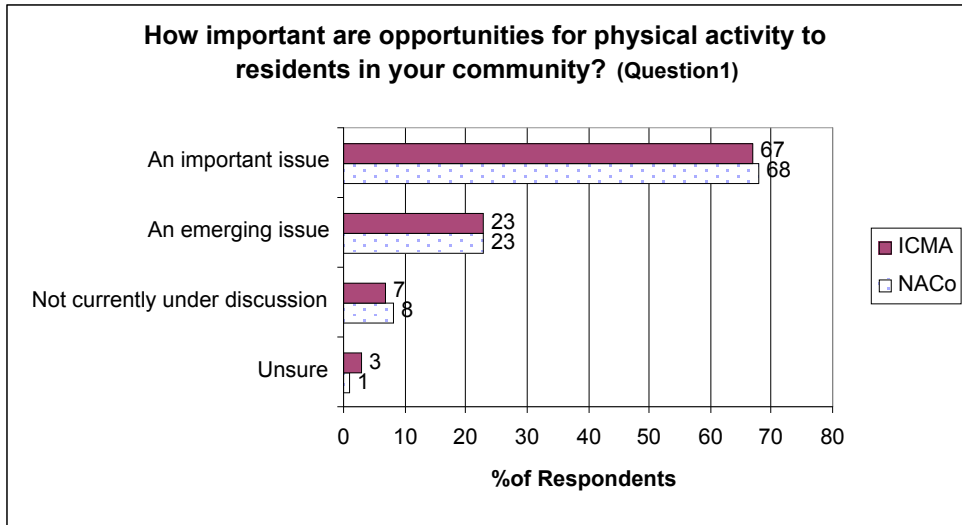


Figure 1

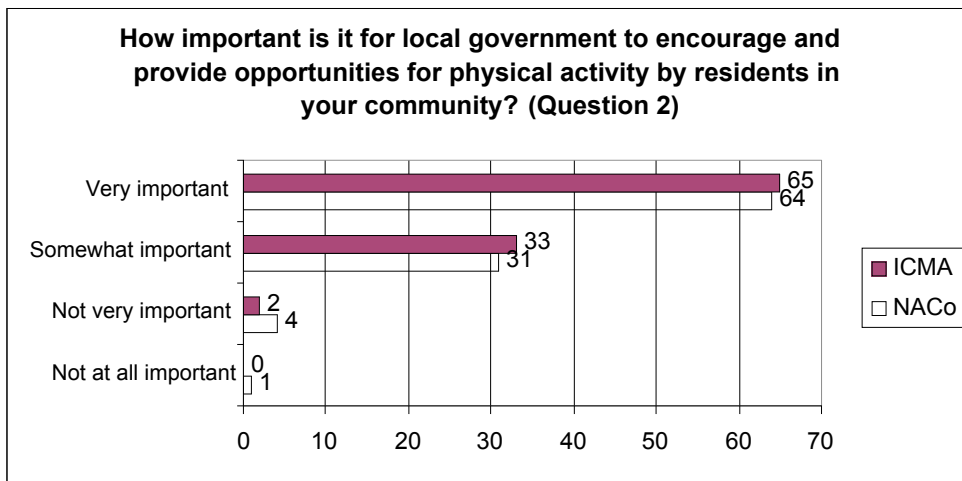


Figure 2

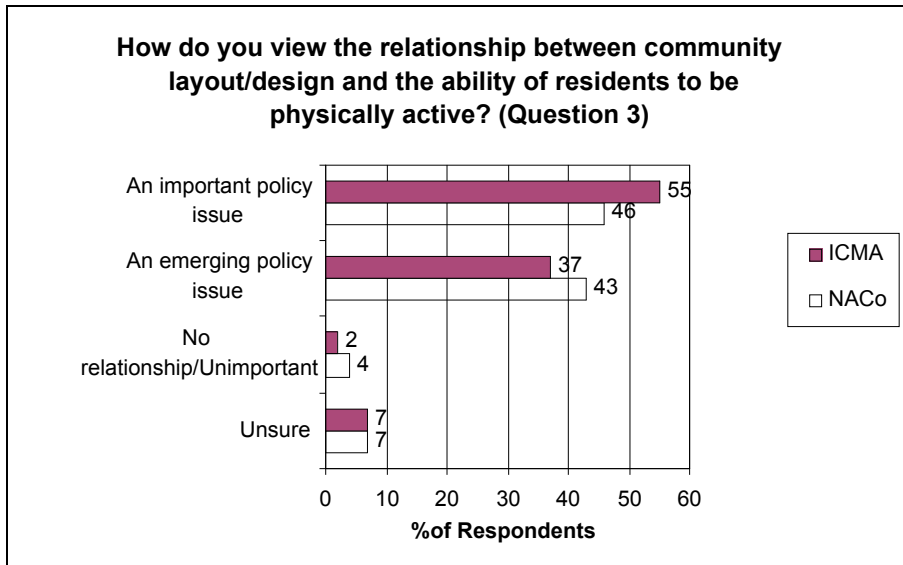


Figure 3

Both ICMA and NACo respondents cited very similar requirements for building active living communities. In order of priority, survey respondents rated the following factors as either “most important” or “very important” (Table 1):

Important factors to achieving active living communities (Question 5)			
ICMA	%	NACo	%
Strong community support	89	Strong community support	86
Local government leadership	84	Local government leadership	80
Partnership with schools	69	Partnership with schools	73
Compelling health statistics	49	Compelling health statistics	69

Table 1

Respondents noted that certain governmental departments were likely candidates to take the lead in active living initiatives, with others providing a supportive role. The results indicate a broad range of departmental involvement, although both ICMA and NACo respondents tended to ascribe a leadership role to departments traditionally involved with physical activity. Planning, health and transportation departments were also cited often as likely candidates for a leading role.:

- Parks and Recreation (ICMA 89% lead role; NACo 80% lead role)
- Planning (ICMA 71% lead role; NACo 63% lead role)
- Health (ICMA 50% lead role; NACo 69% lead role)
- Transportation (ICMA 85% lead and supportive role; NACo 83% lead and supportive role)

The survey also identified numerous barriers that prevented local government leaders from effectively promoting active living behaviors. The top six barriers common to both the ICMA and NACo surveys included:

- There is a lack of funding, staff or resources
- Existing building placement and land use patterns make driving a necessity
- The community has not articulated physical activity as a priority
- Encouraging physical activity is not regarded as the role of local government
- Infrastructure is lacking or inadequate
- Lack of knowledge in designing and implementing an effective active living initiative

In order to address these barriers, respondents were asked what tools and resources would be most helpful to them to promote active living behaviors. Once more, there was significant overlap between the two groups of respondents as demonstrated in the table below.

Most helpful in asserting leadership to address barriers to promoting active living behaviors (Question 10)			
ICMA	%	NACo	%
Sample policies and programs	50	Sample policies and programs	60
Best practices/case studies	42	Best practices/case studies	56
Access to local experts, funders, and community groups	31	Increased training/education on the subject	43
Increased training/education on the subject	28	Access to local experts, funders, and community groups	38
Research statistics that prove the benefit of active living	24	Research statistics that prove the benefit of active living	36
Facilitated connection with peers	12	Facilitated connection with peers	17
Other	6	Other	4

Table 2

A more detailed summary of findings by ICMA and NACo follows the recommendations below.

Recommendations to Local Governments

While local government officials perceive that it is necessary to combat obesity, and agree on many of the components necessary to take action, they are facing some significant barriers to achieving long-term success. The barriers most widely cited by both audiences include a lack of funding, staff, or resources and the fact that existing building placement and land use patterns make driving a necessity. Therefore, although respondents believe that reducing obesity and increasing opportunities for physical activity will reduce their health care costs in the long run, there are significant short-term challenges to doing so. Addressing these challenges and implementing measures to promote physical activity will require cooperative efforts focusing simultaneously on health, planning, transportation, parks and recreation, and other issues.

Recommendations include:

1. Recognize the importance of local government leadership.

Local government elected and appointed leaders need to work together to create activity friendly communities. Local elected officials can define a vision and stimulate community excitement and commitment. Local appointed officials can support that vision with skills, personnel, and other important elements of successful implementation. Together, they can develop the policies that ensure that active living communities function well and deliver on their promise.

How to get involved

ICMA's Active Living Ambassadors program is a new network of local government managers who are interested in creating active living communities and who are committed to sharing their experiences and knowledge with their peers.

NACo is implementing a Leadership Network that promotes model resolutions supporting active living initiatives and provides a forum for participants to exchange ideas.

2. Inform citizens about active living and encourage them to expect success.

Respondents cited strong citizen support as their most important issue. Local governments can take a role in educating these citizens about linkages between active living and quality of life, healthcare costs, walkability, social equity, and other important community priorities. Citizens can promote successes and help create the expectation of a healthy community.

What you can do

One strategy that can assist in communicating with the public is the idea of sharing the cost of physical inactivity and poor health. By demonstrating this cost, such as through the use of a new *cost calculator tool*, local government leaders can gain additional support for pursuing initiatives that support citizen health.

(<http://www.leadershipforactiveliving.org/costcalc.htm>)

Another approach is to utilize *Promoting Active Living Communities: A Guide to Marketing and Communication* to craft messages and share information with residents on issues related to healthy community design.

(http://www.leadershipforactiveliving.org/pdf_file/RWJ1F_ToolKit.pdf)

3. Question traditional assumptions about roles.

Active living initiatives can be enhanced through transportation infrastructure, beautification, careful land use planning, educational programming and classes, and many other approaches. Respondents' views about which departments should take the lead in developing active living initiatives (Parks and Recreation followed by Planning and Health) suggest that local leaders may perceive active living in terms of opportunities for exercise, rather than in terms of the broader opportunities to incorporate physical activity into daily routines. On the other hand, some of these responses may have come from communities where Parks and Recreation departments' responsibilities include managing trails, which can be part of the transportation network. A wide range of departments should be considered as partners in supporting better community health. Another advantage of multidisciplinary approaches is that it allows communities to

address the barriers of limited resources. By broadening the mission of a project and combining expertise, more stakeholders (and possibly more funding) can be engaged to support the initiative.

4. Partner with schools.

School siting and design decisions are often beyond the jurisdiction of any one local government, and may even overrule local government plans about land use and transportation patterns. And yet, schools are also important partners because they determine the behaviors of children for most of their waking hours. Collaboration between schools and local governments can enable strategic land use and transportation decisions to support healthier lifestyles for children such as walking or bicycling to school. Such initiatives promote opportunities for interdepartmental and/or private public partnerships.

Encourage Healthy School Sites, Facilities and Policies

State and local education officials influence children's physical activity levels in several important ways. Where schools are located plays a large part in whether or not children can walk or bike to them. School curricula can educate children about the health benefits of active living and enable daily opportunities for physical activity. Schools also can serve as an active living resource in their communities.

(http://www.leadershipforactiveliving.org/pdf_file/LeadershipActionStr%20web.pdf)

5. Communicate needs and barriers to decision makers at other levels of government.

State government officials, such as legislators, need to hear from local governments about what is or is not working. They may need to be informed about particular barriers that need to be addressed, whether related to funding, policies, or institutional capacity.

6. Look for opportunities to retrofit existing buildings and routes to allow for more physical activity options.

In many communities, the built environment already encourages an unhealthy reliance on automobile transportation. In such areas, activities can be targeted toward retrofitting roads, cul-de-sacs, sidewalks and trails, to encourage walking and bicycling. Likewise entrances, stairwells, and other building features can be redesigned to enhance the pedestrian environment.

7. Address land use regulations that inadvertently prohibit active community environments.

Many local government policies actually prevent environments that encourage active living. For example, local governments can encourage land use regulations that encourage mixed use, compact development, or traditional neighborhood design. These

and other smart growth approaches can create incentives for the private sector to contribute to the development of a healthy community.⁵

8. Take advantage of existing resources such as sample policies, programs, and case studies.

Numerous resources already exist to assist local governments develop activity friendly communities. ICMA and NACO Annual conferences include educational sessions and networking events on the topic of active living. Also, both organizations, as well as the Active Living Leadership initiative have extensive online information to assist local governments.⁶ Finally, the Active Living Leadership Action Strategies Guide⁷ provides concrete suggestions for active living policies and programs.

Summary of ICMA Findings⁸

The survey results indicate that most municipal managers believe that local governments have an important role in and commitment to active living. This was true regardless of the jurisdiction size and geographic representation.

Respondents felt an important public duty to provide opportunities for physical activity in the communities where they worked (Questions 1 and 2). Nearly all respondents stated that opportunities for physical activity are an important issue (67%) or an emerging issue (23%) to residents of their community. The vast majority (98%) felt that it was important for local government to encourage and provide opportunities for residents to be physically active.

There was relatively strong knowledge about the link between community design and the ability of residents to be physically active (Questions 3 and 4). Most (56%) rated their level of knowledge about this design/physical activity relationship as Medium, with one third (33%) rating their knowledge as High. Despite a stated lack of knowledge by several respondents, the vast majority (91%) recognized the relationship between community design and the ability for residents to be physically active.

Citizen support for active living initiatives is critical, as is local leadership and partnership with schools (Question 5). When asked to consider the importance of various factors to achieving active living communities, respondents ranked Strong Community Support as the most critical, with over 88% saying it was very important or most important. Local Government Leadership was also ranked high, with 84% saying it was

⁵ The Local Government Commission has developed a resource called “Overcoming Obstacles to Smart Growth through Code Reform” at http://www.lgc.org/freepub/PDF/Land_Use/sg_code_exec_summary.pdf. In addition, ICMA is preparing a guidebook for local government leaders and staff on the code reform process for active living. It will be available in late October, 2004 at <http://icma.org/activeliving>.

⁶ <http://www.leadershipforactiveliving.org/index.htm>

⁷ http://www.leadershipforactiveliving.org/pdf_file/LeadershipActionStr%20web.pdf

⁸ For a copy of the **Active Living Approaches by Local Government** survey and responses, visit <http://icma.org/activeliving>.

very important or most important.⁹ Partnership with Schools also had strong support, with 68% listing it as very important or most important. The other choices had a more general support: State Government, Compelling Health Statistics, and Data Linking Physical Activity Levels and Financial Benefits each ranked higher in the somewhat important category.

Respondents viewed Parks and Recreation departments as needing to assume a leading role in promoting active living communities, along with Planning and Health departments (Question 6). When asked which departments should take a leading, supportive, minor, or no role in developing active living communities, respondents provided a wealth of information that deserves further scrutiny. The majority said that Parks and Recreation departments (89%) should have a leading role in developing a community conducive to active living, followed by Planning (71%), Health (50%), and Other (50%)¹⁰. In addition, Public Works and Transportation each had a high percent of respondents ranking them *either* in a supportive role or a leading role (87% and 82%, respectively).

Most communities were already pursuing initiatives linking biking, walking, health, and community design (Question 7). Over two-thirds (69%) of communities represented had already introduced at least one initiative linking biking, walking, health, and community design. Only 13% were not considering initiatives linking these issues.

There was apparent consensus on the top three actions that local governments could pursue to have the greatest impact on addressing community health and physical inactivity (Question 8). While each of the 22 possible choices was identified by at least one respondent as one of the top three actions local governments could take, most were identified by less than 10% of respondents. The top five responses have much higher rates, and high numbers of local respondents said they had already put such practices into place.

Local Government Actions	Identified (Yet to be Implemented) by	(Previously) Implemented by
Develop a cohesive system of parks and trails, incorporating accessible neighborhood parks	45%	70%
Establish processes to assess and improve existing local active living infrastructure (e.g., by using design guidelines)	40%	67%
Require that neighborhood streets be designed with pedestrians and cyclists in mind (e.g., by using design guidelines)	32%	63%
Support recreational programs that encourage active living	24%	84%
Ensure that physical activity facilities (youth/senior centers, trails, etc.) are accessible and affordable	21%	81%

⁹ By local government leadership, it is not clear whether local government administrators were referring to leadership in general or to elected leadership. Later in the survey, it is clear that many feel there is an important role for elected leaders to play (See Question 6).

¹⁰ Most common entries for Other included Public Safety/Police and Elected Officials.

These relatively high implementation rates suggest that municipal managers already feel that they are addressing the most urgent and effective needs. While some other approaches that were not among these five also have high implementation rates, the assumption may be made that they are not all considered such high priority.

Municipal managers identified significant barriers to promoting active living behaviors (Question 9). The most notable was a lack of funding, staff, or resources (67%). There was similar response for each of the following: Existing building placement and land use patterns make driving a necessity (40%); and, The community has not articulated physical activity as a priority (40%). This third response echoes the high value respondents placed earlier on Strong Community Support as an important factor in developing active living communities.

Sample policies and programs, case studies, and funding were among the top needs (Question 10). One half (50%) identified sample policies and programs as the most helpful (ranked 1 or 2 on a scale of 1-7) for respondents to assert leadership to address the barriers identified previously. Case studies and best practices were identified by 42% as top needs. Finally, nearly 10% of respondents specified Funding under the Other category.

Summary of NACo Findings¹¹

Findings from the survey indicate that there is strong agreement across the board that communities should be conducive to physical activity, and that county government can and should play a role in assuring that they are. However, the challenges counties face differ from one another in rural, suburban and urban areas as do the approaches favored. For instance, county leaders were asked how they view the relationship between how their community is designed (school siting, bicycle and pedestrian accessibility, neighborhood safety, transportation, etc.) and the ability of their residents to be physically active. Larger counties tend to view this relationship as very important. Fewer smaller counties rated this relationship as highly, perhaps because they have more open space in which to readily walk. Nonetheless, virtually all respondents, regardless of size or location, felt that it was important for counties to encourage and provide opportunities for physical activity by residents in their communities.

Respondents recognized that it is important for local government to provide opportunities for physical activity to residents in their communities (Questions 1 and 2). Counties were asked how important opportunities are for physical activity to residents in their communities. The responding counties overwhelmingly (89%) indicated that opportunities for physical activity are an important issue or emerging issue. In addition, for the vast majority (97%) of responding counties, it is very or somewhat important for local governments to encourage and provide opportunities for physical activity.

¹¹ For a copy of the **Active Living Approaches by Local Government** survey and responses, visit <http://naco.org>

Counties acknowledge the relationship between community layout/design and the ability of residents to be physically active (Questions 3 and 4). Eighty eight percent reported that this is an important or emerging policy issue. Less than ten percent of respondents were not sure about the relationship or did not believe there was an important relationship between these factors. The majority of survey respondents rated their knowledge about the link between community layout/design and the ability of residents to be physically active as high (35%) or medium (48%).

Strong community support for active living initiatives is crucial; local government leadership, health statistics and school partnerships are also important factors for active living communities (Question 5). Counties were asked to rate the importance of various factors to achieving active living communities. An overwhelming majority cited strong community support as the most or a very important factor (85%). Other highly rated factors included local government leadership (80%), compelling health statistics (72%) and partnerships with schools (70%). State government assistance (60%) and data linking physical activity levels and financial benefits (64%) received general support.

Respondents prioritized the leading role of the Parks and Recreation departments and Planning departments in promoting active living communities (Question 6). Counties were asked to assign different roles to local government departments ranging from leading, supportive, minor to no role at all in developing active living communities. The majority of respondents said that Parks and Recreation departments (80%) should have a leading role in developing a community conducive to active living. Other departments were also recommended highly for leading roles including Health (69%), Planning (63%) and Other (50%). Other departments ranked highly in either a supportive role or a leading role including: Transportation (86%), Economic Development (85%), Environment (85%), Administration/finance (82%), Public Works (80%), Human Services (74%), Housing (73%) and Social Services (70%). Those departments seen as least relevant to active living were Code Enforcement and Emergency Management.

Most communities have introduced initiatives linking physical activity and community design (Question 7). The majority of respondents (69%) noted that their communities had already introduced at least one initiative that links biking, walking, health and community design. Only 12% of respondents were not considering initiatives addressing these issues.

Actions that local government could pursue to have the greatest impact on addressing community health and physical inactivity vary over time (Question 8). Respondents were asked to identify actions that their local government could undertake that would have the greatest impact on addressing the growing health problems related to physical activity in their communities.

In the next year, the top ranking actions include:

- Use revenue-raising methods to fund public health programs (e.g., a sales tax on junk food) (71%);

- Incorporate health considerations into planning processes, such as inviting a health official to provide input (48%); and,
- Encourage walk-to-school programs as an alternative to riding in buses or cars (45%).

The top ranking actions that respondents were planning to implement include:

- ≈ Locate schools in walkable neighborhoods (23%);
- Introduce active living issues such as walkable communities into public dialogue (19%); and,
- Use revenue-raising methods to fund public health programs (18%).

The three most common actions already implemented were:

- Increase measures to keep pedestrian and bicycle safety in traffic (84%);
- Require that neighborhood streets be designed with pedestrians and cyclists in mind (81%); and,
- Support or sponsor active living programs to encourage community participation (75%).

Counties face barriers to promoting active living behaviors (Question 9). Respondents identified the top ranked barriers facing communities in promoting active living behaviors. The most notable was a lack of funding, staff, or resources (74%) followed by existing building placement and land use patterns make driving a necessity (50%). In addition, a number of respondents noted that the community has not articulated physical activity as a priority (33%) and that encouraging physical activity of residents is not regarded as the role of local government (32%).

Sample policies and programs and case studies can help address barriers to promoting active living behaviors (Question 10). **Counties were asked to prioritize a number of potential activities and resources that would be helpful in asserting leadership to address barriers to promoting active living behaviors. The number one request was sample policies and programs (42%). Best practices/case studies (28%) and increased training/education on the subject (28%) tied for second, followed by access to local experts, funders, and community groups (26%). Research statistics that prove the benefit of active living (22%) ranked fourth. Facilitated connection with peers (7%) followed, and in addition to the choices provided, a number of survey respondents specifically noted that funding is crucial to support any initiative.**

APPENDIX

Survey Methodology and Limitations

The purpose of this survey was to better understand local government leaders' views of active living in three ways: awareness, current practices, and needs for the future. To do so, the survey team solicited input from public health and active living experts and incorporated or adapted questions from other surveys on active living, such as that of the American Planning Association (APA), which was conducted in spring 2003. The assumption was that asking local government leaders a similar set of questions would provide a valuable opportunity for future comparison of views and concerns.

ICMA and NACo designed the survey for local government officials jointly and questions were vetted before the final version was produced. The cover letter was the same for both organizations and printed on their own stationery.

Designing the survey jointly provided a useful base to compile responses across a range of local governments. Nonetheless, the different jurisdictional levels surveyed and regions represented provide insights into the general trends facing active living. In general, many of the responses were remarkably similar between elected officials and appointed officials.

Almost all of the surveys were fully completed except for one question. The results of Question 8 yielded more qualitative answers including insights into the two groups of participants and suggest a problem with the wording of the survey question. In short, most of the ICMA respondents identified the "Top 3 Actions" while the majority of NACo respondents did not indicate anything in the column titled "Top 3 Action". Therefore, it was not possible to compare the NACo and the ICMA responses to this question. We are not sure why this occurred.

ICMA Approach

In February 2004, ICMA distributed a paper version of the survey to Chief Administrative Officers in municipalities (cities, towns, townships, villages, etc.) with populations 10,000 and over. A second mailing in March followed this. Out of 3,246 municipal representatives surveyed, 959 responded, for a response rate of 29.5%.

The response represented communities of various population sizes and regions as follows:

Survey Response			
	No. of municipalities surveyed (A)	No. responding and percentage of responses	
	Surveyed (A)	Responded	% of (A)
Total	3,246	959	29.5%
Population group			
Over 1,000,000	9	2	22.2%

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500,000-1,000,000	22	2	9.1%
250,000-499,999	37	8	21.6%
100,000-249,999	179	57	31.8%
50,000-99,999	403	128	31.8%
25,000-49,999	779	242	31.1%
10,000-24,999	1,817	520	28.6%
Geographic region			
Northeast	878	185	21.1%
North-Central	908	306	33.7%
South	839	261	31.1%
West	621	207	33.3%
Geographic division			
New England	352	85	24.1%
Mid-Atlantic	526	100	19.0%
East North-Central	660	213	32.3%
West North-Central	248	93	37.5%
South Atlantic	382	134	35.1%
East South-Central	169	35	20.7%
West South-Central	288	92	31.9%
Mountain	160	61	38.1%
Pacific Coast	461	146	31.7%
Metro status			
Central	540	165	30.6%
Suburban	2,087	602	28.8%
Independent	619	192	31.0%
Form of government			
Mayor-council	1,166	220	18.9%
Council-manager	1,852	694	37.5%
Commission	73	14	19.2%
Town meeting	108	23	21.3%
Representative town meeting	47	8	17.0%

NACo Approach

NACo mailed or faxed the survey to county officials (795) in February 2004. Notices for the web version of the survey were sent out in the NACo newsletter in March 2004. The format of the paper copy and the web version were identical. The survey was addressed to the chief elected officer of each government with instructions to pass it on to the most appropriate staff person. Survey responses were accepted by fax, mail and electronically. Senior managers completed the majority of the surveys.

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In addition, the survey was distributed to participants (30) of one workshop (*Is America's Overweight Population Costing Your County?*) at NACo's Annual Conference in July 2004 and 15 completed surveys were collected.

Survey responses were received from more than 100 counties, with counties ranging in size from less than 10,000 in population to over 1 million. Responses were received from 38 states representing nearly all regions of the country. The overall response rate was 15.8%.

The response represented counties of various population sizes and various regions as follows:

Population group	No. of counties surveyed	No. responding			Survey responses by State	
Total	825	128				
					Alabama	4
Over 1,000,000		5			Arizona	5
500,000-1,000,000		15			Arkansas	3
250,000-499,999		19			California	5
100,000-249,999		28			Delaware	3
50,000-99,999		15			Florida	7
25,000-49,999		17			Georgia	1
10,000-24,999		15			Hawaii	2
Unknown		5			Idaho	6
					Illinois	4
					Iowa	2
					Kansas	1
					Kentucky	1
					Louisiana	3
					Maryland	9
					Michigan	8
					Minnesota	4
					Missouri	4
					Montana	3
					Nebraska	3
					Nevada	1
					New Mexico	2
					New York	4
					North Carolina	6
					North Dakota	1
					Ohio	3
					Oregon	1
					Pennsylvania	5

APPENDIX

					South Carolina	2
					South Dakota	1
					Tennessee	2
					Texas	2
					Utah	3
					Virginia	4
					Washington	4
					West Virginia	1
					Wisconsin	2
					Wyoming	3
					Unknown	3
					TOTAL	128