

**Gering-Scottsbluff-Terrytown
Active Living Advisory Committee (ALAC)
Q&A
Final 6/9/2017**

What is active living?

Active living is a way of life and a community culture that integrates physical activity into daily routines through transportation, recreation, and neighborhood choices that support walking, biking, and using mobility devices (like wheelchairs, walkers, or canes), and that encourage active play and healthy options for all abilities and ages.

What will the ALAC do?

The primary purpose of the ALAC will be to create and improve communication links and resource sharing – between citizens and government, between and within governments and agencies, between governments and granting agencies – to support healthy and active behaviors and lifestyles. The ALAC will not dictate policy; rather, it will serve as a resource and a liaison to assist active living projects or programs. Specific actions the ALAC may take include:

- Moving to fruition the action planning work product strategies developed during the Activate Scottsbluff, Gering, Terrytown stakeholder meetings:
 - Safe Active Transportation on All Travel Ways
 - Creating Collaborative Community Ownership
 - Complete Streets: Planning for a Safer, More Connected, Healthier Community
 - Seeking Funding Opportunities
- Assisting city staff with public education and outreach activities that promote active transportation and an active lifestyle.
- Supporting wellness and health promotion in workplaces, schools, and other institutions.
- Assisting city staff with outreach to specific user groups, such as seniors, teens, the physically disabled, vulnerable and diverse populations to encourage an active lifestyle.

Why does active living matter to our community?

- Public health. Five of the top seven leading causes of death among Nebraskans – cancer, heart disease, stroke, respiratory disease, and diabetes – are strongly linked to behavior, including sedentary living. Living an active life is a personal choice, but it's a choice that is highly influenced by such things as community infrastructure. Making it easier for people to be active makes it more likely they will choose to engage in healthy levels of physical activity.

- **Economics.** In recent surveys, both the Baby Boomer and Millennial generations showed a preference for living in communities that are bikable and walkable. Tourism surveys show a preference for “adventure travel” – including hiking and biking. Improving infrastructure for biking and walking can attract people to our communities and encourage them to stay. Additionally, increased physical activity leads to increased health and a reduction in economic loss due to illness.
- **Safety.** Some of the people who are most at risk for injury and death as pedestrians include children and seniors. Neighborhoods that are designed to encourage walking have lower rates of traffic fatalities for both people on foot and in cars. By ensuring that our communities are designed for our most vulnerable citizens, everyone’s safety is improved.
- **Equity.** Car and truck traffic is important for our economy, but when our community’s transportation systems are designed exclusively for automobiles, people who are unable to drive for legal, financial or medical reasons have difficulty fully participating in society, including getting to school, a job, or the store. Ensuring that people can travel safely on foot, by bicycle and with a mobility device can help every member of our community live a more productive life. A more walkable, bikable community can help give senior citizens and people with disabilities enough independence to enable them to live independently in their own homes.

Why does the proposed ALAC include all three city governments?

- Some of the biggest barriers to a transportation network for people walking or using bicycles or mobility devices - including the North Platte River, railroad tracks, and high-traffic roads - occur at jurisdictional boundaries where inter-jurisdictional cooperation is needed.
- Residents of Gering, Scottsbluff and Terrytown cross city boundaries and may have an interest in and have insight to provide about conditions for walking or using a bicycle or a mobility device where they work, shop and play. Similarly, professionals working within city government can benefit by sharing ideas, plans, programs, lessons learned, and success stories that are unique to this area of western Nebraska.
- The existing Monument Valley Pathway is a hugely important amenity for our communities, and is an example of tri-city cooperation to develop a healthier and more attractive community. The ALAC can build upon and expand this success.

Why is ALAC needed?

- **Coordination and communication.** Many existing departments and committees address some of the subjects relating to active living – streets and public works, parks and recreation, engineering and planning / development, police and public safety, school districts, Valley Visions – but none of them are designed to take a comprehensive view of growing an active living culture in our community. The ALAC can create a channel for good two-way communications between city government and citizens to foster well-informed decisions for improving quality of life and safety. So many programs and projects are happening to support active living in our communities, it can be difficult to keep track of them all. The ALAC can serve as an information hub.
- **Fiscal responsibility.** Ensuring that the needs of all users of transportation infrastructure –including people who walk, bike or use mobility devices – are considered early in street repair and development projects can save money in the long run because facilities will not be as likely to need to be redesigned later. Liability risk to city government can be reduced as well. Cities have been the targets of wrongful death lawsuits for not taking steps to ensure the safety of people who must cross streets on foot.
- **Stability.** Creating a change in culture that will result in a more physically active community will take time. The people who are working on this effort may change. The structure of a committee linked into city governments will help to ensure that the effort is sustained long enough to make a difference.

What will ALAC cost?

There are no direct costs to city government. The Panhandle Public Health District will organize ALAC meetings and communications. Some city staff time will be spent attending ALAC meetings. However, this cost can be mitigated through less staff time needed to gather citizen input. There can be additional cost savings to government if the ALAC can serve as a coordination point for volunteers to assist with such tasks as pedestrian / bicycle traffic counts or communication about sidewalk codes. One of the ALAC's goals is to develop partnerships through which grants or other public-private funding structures can be used to meet community needs, so the committee can have a positive impact on city project budgets.

Where did this proposal come from?

This proposal to form ALAC came out of the Activate Scottsbluff, Gering, Terrytown stakeholder meetings kickstarted through a DHHS grant through the Panhandle Public Health District. The PPHD has facilitated the working group of committed people – including representatives from Scottsbluff and Gering city governments, public health professionals, citizens and social service agencies – that refined this proposal, which is based on similar committees from other Nebraska communities, including Omaha and Sidney.