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Built Environment Approaches Flyer

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Street Scale Design



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www.stepintocuba.org

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: Urban design and land use policies and practices should support physical activity in small geographic areas (generally a few blocks).

Street-scale urban design and land use policies involve the efforts of urban planners, architects, engineers, developers, and public health professionals to change the physical environment of small geographic areas, generally limited to a few blocks, in ways that support physical activity. Policy instruments employed include: building codes, roadway design standards, and environmental changes. Design components include: improved street lighting, infrastructure projects to increase safety of street crossing, use of traffic calming approaches (e.g., speed humps, traffic circles), and enhancing street landscaping.

Evidence: Results from a Systematic Review by the Task Force

Research demonstrates that there is a relationship between the perceived environment and physical activity practices or effectiveness in providing a more inviting and safer outdoor environment for activity. Overall, the median improvement in some aspect of physical activity (e.g., number of walkers or percent of active individuals) was 35%. Additional benefits may have been brought about by these interventions and include:

- Improvements in green space
- Increased sense of community and decreased isolation
- Reductions in crime and stress
- Increased walking and bicycling on urban streets (although beneficial, this may also pose a risk of increased injury to pedestrians or cyclists, due to increased exposure to motor vehicles)

Cuba Strategy

Walkability of Cuba, NM, is challenged by a major highway – US 550 – that bisects the village, as well as subsidiary state highways and county and city roads without sidewalks or bicycle lanes. Two central strategies have been adopted by Step Into Cuba:

- Enhancing US 550 for pedestrian use
- Proposing new pedestrian walkways connecting key destinations along state and county roads



Community Campaign

Access to Places

Individually Adapted

Street Scale Design

Social Support

More Information

stepintocuba.org

hsc.unm.edu/som/prc/

thecommunityguide.org

Specific Cuba Approaches

❖ Providing Recommendations through a Walkability Study and Health Impact Assessment

A half-day community workshop was jointly sponsored by the UNM PRC and the Nacimiento Community Foundation to assess and compile input relating to walkability in the Village of Cuba. Findings were synthesized into a written report for distribution to planners and policy-makers. A health impact assessment was performed to promote the expected health benefits of proposed pedestrian enhancements to US 550 in Cuba. A flyer developed from the assessment was widely distributed to the community.

❖ Planning a New Section of US 550 Sidewalk

Approximately \$500,000 in New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) funding was made available for sidewalk improvement along US 550 shortly after inception of Step Into Cuba. Step Into Cuba worked closely with the Village of Cuba and planners and designers on alternative projects that would be cost-effective for improved health, safety, and appearance of the community. A final decision was made to construct a four foot wide model section of new handicap accessible sidewalk – with a curb buffer, better driveway turnouts and pedestrian curb cuts – adjacent to the existing sidewalk on the south end of Cuba. It was constructed in the fall of 2011 and has already become an important walking destination.

❖ Proposing Further US 550 Pedestrian Enhancements

Following successful walkability assessment, collection of public input and planning of the new sidewalk project, further US 550 enhancements have been proposed. The NMDOT has announced the availability of \$750,000 for a second phase of sidewalk construction that will renovate the remainder of the existing sidewalk in conformance with standards of the newly constructed sidewalk segment. Need for crosswalks and traffic calming will be addressed through a crosswalk study to be performed at the same time as planning of second phase sidewalk construction. A planning partnership with the NMDOT's landscape architectural program (Context Sensitive Solutions), the Mid Region Council of Governments, and a transportation consultant hired by UNM PRC has facilitated these important developments.

❖ Proposing New Pedestrian Walkways

Four new pedestrian walkways/bikeways were identified by a UNM PRC consultant and the Step Into Cuba Alliance. These would connect places such as the Cuba schools, village park, low income housing, county fairgrounds, and the proposed Continental Divide Trail segment to US 550 sidewalks. These enhancements were proposed in the form of project applications drafted with community input by the UNM PRC consultant, accepted and prioritized by the Village of Cuba, and submitted to the regional transportation planning body. After acceptance and re-ranking, they were forwarded to the NMDOT district responsible for Cuba area projects. A pedestrian safety project was immediately recommended for funding while the others remain under consideration.

